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Lutheran bishop takes Catholic archbishop to task

Dennis Coday | Oct. 15, 2012 NCR Today

In a open letter published in the Minneapolis Star Tribune [1] about Minnesota's Nov. 6 vote on marriage equality , Herbert W. Chilstrom, the former presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, challenges St. Paul Minneapolis Catholic Archbishop John Nienstadt on political grounds:

> Having served as a Lutheran bishop in Minnesota and then as the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), I write as one who stands on level ground with you. Like you, I have a deep sense of call to the ministry of the Gospel. ...
>
> I recognize your authority in formulating positions for your own flock in Minnesota. That is one thing. But for you and others to campaign for an amendment that imposes your stance on all citizens in Minnesota, including other Christians, believers of other faith groups and nonbelievers, is overstepping your bounds.

and on theological grounds.

> By word and action, you leave the impression that there is little room for dissent in your church. ... In our ELCA, we engage a wide spectrum of clergy and laity in developing statements to guide us in our thinking about complex social issues. When those statements reach our national assembly, they require a two-thirds vote for approval. But no one's conscience is bound by those statements. Dissent is fostered and welcomed.
>
> This raises the question: If there were a call from Roman Catholic members in Minnesota to vote on an issue of significance, would you allow for such a vote? And if a simple majority voted in favor, would you accept that vote as final? It's clear that such a vote would not even be permitted in your church.

Bishop Chilstrom isn't asking questions that many Catholics are asking among ourselves.

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[1] http://www.startribune.com/opinion/commentaries/173954851.html?refer=y