

CATHOLIC REPORTER UNJUSTLY FIRED IN MAINE

We recently came to the defense of Larry Grard, a former newspaper reporter for Maine's *Morning Sentinel*, because of his recent termination.

For almost two decades, Grard worked at the *Morning Sentinel* and was fired because he e-mailed a letter (using his own personal e-mail account) to the head of an advocacy group, much to the disapproval of his boss Bill Thompson.

To be specific, Grard, who is Catholic, was unhappy with the angry comments made by Trevor Thomas of the Human Rights Campaign following November's election results. Having just lost in his bid to secure same-sex marriage in Maine, Thomas blamed hatred of gays for the loss. Grard wrote back, blaming Thomas' side for generating hate. That was all he did.

Interestingly, Grard's wife, Lisa, who writes a bimonthly cooking column for the newspaper, was subsequently fired. It was suddenly decided that her work was "no longer a good fit." It sounded like reprisal to us.

As a Catholic, Grard has a right to hold, express and defend the teachings of the Catholic Church with impunity. While the First Amendment does not apply to private organizations, the fact remains that if Grard can be fired for something like this, then the rights of all reporters are in jeopardy. This explains why the Portland Newspaper Guild is standing squarely behind him. So is the Catholic League. We put Grard and his wife in contact with law firms that may want to sue Mr. Thompson and his newspapers.