

CATHOLIC REPORTER UNJUSTLY FIRED IN MAINE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue explains why the Catholic League is defending Larry Grard:

For almost two decades, Larry Grard worked as a reporter at Maine's *Morning Sentinel*. He was recently fired because he e-mailed a letter (using his own e-mail account) to the head of an advocacy organization that his boss, Bill Thompson, did not like.

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

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." Sounds 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 have put Grard, and his wife, in contact with law firms that may want to sue Mr. Thompson and his newspaper.

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