

CATHOLIC SCHOOL ATHLETICS AND SEXUALITY

The divide between Catholic sexual ethics and secular sexual ethics has been played out in Pennsylvania and Minnesota in a dramatic way.

The *New York Times* recently reported that the Diocese of Harrisburg has adopted a policy barring boys on high school wrestling teams from competing with girls from other schools; girls in Catholic schools have also been barred from football and rugby teams. The policy is not new: the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference Education Department has explicit rules on this subject. Indeed, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia previously dealt with this issue.

The issue in Minnesota involved transgender students. Because the Minnesota State High School League was recently considering a policy that was written in part by LGBT activists—boys and girls may even be allowed to shower together – the Minnesota Catholic Conference got out in front of this matter by opposing any policy that committed Catholic schools to support changes in gender identity.

In both instances, “enlightened” critics have assailed the Catholic policies as being “antiquated,” “pathetic,” and “discriminatory.”

The rationale behind the Pennsylvania policy was clear-headed: there are nature-based differences between the sexes that need to be observed. Ergo, sports that involve “substantial and potentially immodest physical contact” ought to be treated differently. All but the enlightened ones have the cognitive ability to distinguish between wrestling and ping-pong.

The rationale behind the Minnesota policy was also clear-headed: the enlightened ones need to learn that the term

gender refers to social roles for the sexes that take their cues from nature. Moreover, gender identity disorder is a mental illness requiring treatment for the afflicted, not the affirmation of social institutions.

We were astonished to read that the *New York Times* ran another story the next day on this topic.

The *New York Times* had a story about the Diocese of Harrisburg's decision to ban high school boys from competing against girls in school wrestling. This was the second day in a row that the *Times* covered this story, and there was nothing new of any substance in the last piece.

The latter news story on the Pennsylvania Catholic high school wrestling policy merited 978 words. By contrast, the same day's *New York Times* ran a story on Oslo withdrawing from a bid to host the 2022 winter Olympics that totaled 406 words. A story on Derek Jeter starting his own web forum was a mere 599 words. Even the Major League Baseball playoff game between the Pirates and Giants didn't out do the Catholic high school story—it was 897 words. If we add the first story on the wrestling policy to the most recent one (it was 401 words), the total figure is 1,379.

No newspaper in Philadelphia or Pittsburgh reported on this story, and outside of *The Sentinel* (a Carlisle, Pennsylvania paper), it got almost no coverage; no national wire service or newspaper covered it.

So what's going on? This was more than political correctness at work—we know the *Times* is fixated on matters sexual—it evinces an appetite for religious profiling. But not when it comes to all religions: the *Times* has a special place for the Roman Catholic Church in its portfolio.

The *Times* recently dropped 100 people from its newsroom—7.5 percent of its staff. Nice to know that it still has the resources to monitor Catholic high school wrestling policies

in Pennsylvania. It all comes down to what is a priority, and when it comes to Catholicism and women, few subjects matter more to those at the top of the *New York Times*.