

CATHOLICISM IS NOT INCLUSIVE

When the pastor of a rural Minnesota Catholic church learned that three male musicians each claimed to be married to a man, he dismissed them. When officials at a suburban Maryland Catholic school learned that a substitute teacher and field hockey coach was associated with a white supremacist group, they dismissed him.

Both decisions were merited.

The Catholic Church opposes gay marriage and racism. While neither the gay men nor the white supremacist were openly flouting their convictions, once their status became publicly known, Catholic officials had little choice but to dismiss them. Not to do so would be to give sanction to behaviors that are in direct contradiction to the teachings of the Church.

That should be the end of the story. However, the three gay men have garnered some community support, and one of them is refusing to leave the church. There has been no positive reaction to the teacher who has ties to racists, and he is not contesting the decision to fire him.

Similarly, gay activists have taken up the cause of the gay musicians, maintaining that the Catholic Church should be inclusive. But that is precisely the argument that white racists could make regarding the Maryland teacher: the Church should welcome everyone.

The word catholic means universal, but it is a profound misreading of Catholicism to suggest that it is an inclusive organization. It is not. Nor for that matter is *any institution*: from the smallest cell in society, namely the family, to global organizations such as the United Nations, all are founded on exclusivity: they have lines of authority, based on either kinship or institutional strictures, that exclude those who do not qualify for membership.

Diversity, si. Inclusiveness, no. That is what Catholicism represents.