

# MEDIA COVERAGE OF CATHOLIC DISSIDENTS

Media coverage of Catholic dissidents has given voice to organizations that are not Catholic. To cite one example, the October 5 edition of *NBC Nightly News* with Tom Brokaw provided a platform for representatives from *Catholics for a Free Choice* (CFFC), allowing the viewer to conclude that it was an authentic Catholic organization. But it is neither Catholic nor an organization.

On November 4, 1993, the *National Conference of Catholic Bishops* released a statement saying that “many people, including Catholics, may be led to believe that it [CFFC] is an authentic Catholic organization. It is not. It has no affiliation, formal or otherwise, with the Catholic Church.” in addition, CFFC president Frances Kissling has admitted that CFFC has no members. In truth, it is nothing but a well-funded letterhead.

Representatives from *Dignity* also appeared on the *NBC Nightly News* show of October 5. *Dignity* is an organization of gays and lesbians who claim to be Catholic while openly flouting Catholic doctrine. The organization is not listed in *The Official Catholic Directory* of 1995 precisely because it is not regarded by the Catholic Church as an authentic Catholic organization. But *Courage* is.

*Courage* is a group of openly gay and lesbian Catholics who accept Church teachings on homosexuality and are struggling with their sexuality. *Courage* is listed in *The Official Catholic Directory* of 1995 and the Church has a ministry that serves them. Yet *Dignity*, not *Courage*, is most frequently called upon by the media to present the Catholic view on homosexuality.

Catholic League president William Donohue offered the following comment on this subject:

“The media do a great disservice to Catholics and non-Catholics alike when *Catholics for a Free Choice* and *Dignity* are presented as though they were genuine voices in the Catholic community. The effect of such misrepresentation is to promote dissent rather than to record it. As such, it is irresponsible for the media to allow itself to become willing accomplices in public deception. The term catholic means universal, but to be a Catholic is to acknowledge the authority of the magisterium of the Catholic Church. This is something that neither group accepts, the effect of which is to nullify their status as being Catholic.”