

Bishop's rush to judge

Diocese looks hypocritical condemning sex-ed program

Now comes word from my own Catholic bishop in Austin that challenges my parenting skills if I expose my children to the "morally inappropriate" sex education conference put on by Planned Parenthood of Central Texas called Nobody's Fool.

"The program material is devoid of Christian morals regarding sexuality," the diocese said in a June 18 memo from Bishop Gregory M. Aymond, who oversees Waco's Catholic churches from Austin.

"Our diocese does not approve of this program and strongly encourages Catholics not to utilize it."

It's a simple, but powerful warning that resonates with lifelong Catholics such as myself who grew up learning to revere their clergy and, in particular, the bishop.

Which makes it all the more frightening for me to declare: How dare Bishop Aymond pass judgment on a program that he has not seen, particularly at a time when the Catholic Church itself has been exposed for its own morally inappropriate behavior as it relates to the sexuality of some of its clergy?

My oldest son participated in last year's Nobody's Fool and we have already enrolled him for this year.

I completely understand how some parents may be uncomfortable, even offended by the material presented at Nobody's Fool. Yes, it is graphic. It is uncomfortably straightforward. And after last year, it forced my wife and me to sit down with our son and have a conversation that we could have never had with our parents.

That's our style as parents. It is based on a theory that if we give our child honest, straightforward information that he will be smart enough to make the right choices. It may not be the style for other parents. Other parents may have a style that works better for them and for their children.

And I say, "Good for them." I won't make judgments about their parenting style. In return, I ask not to be judged, especially when



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the consistent feedback I get from adults is that my children are respectful and well-behaved.

In particular, I ask not to be judged by a member of the clergy who lives 100 miles away and is passing judgment based on information that is being sent to him by someone intent on destroying that program.

That someone is John Pisciotta, a Waco resident whom I consider a friend.

As I have publicly declared before: Pisciotta is a smart man who has achieved some brilliant political successes recently in his fight against Planned Parenthood. That he convinced Bishop Aymond to weigh in on this matter should be considered another masterstroke for Pisciotta.

I would hope that Pisciotta does not consider me morally corrupt, particularly since he and I have begun having lunch fairly routinely to catch up with one another in his ongoing fight against abortion.

But Pisciotta has managed to convince Bishop Aymond to taint parents such as myself who are trying hard to raise good, decent

children by taking advantage of everything available to educate their children. This includes the church, the schools, after-school programs and, in particular our own ability to have constant, ongoing conversations with our children.

Children are smart. Certainly smart enough to see the hypocrisy of an institution such as the Catholic Church which continues to be plagued by sexual abuse scandals, yet sees fit to continue to pass judgment on the Christian morals of others.

The Catholic Church has at least been consistent in condemning capital punishment. But I have yet to see any memo by Bishop Aymond passing judgment on the Christian morals of the judicial system.

That Bishop Aymond is willing to practice such hypocrisy seems to me a better example of something that is morally inappropriate.

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