



## The following is a message from the parents of two children being denied re-enrollment at Sacred Heart of Jesus School

We are normal people. We have two children, a nice house, and a dog. We both hold professional jobs in the community. You would likely pass us on the street and not take much notice. We work hard, and enjoy spending time with our family, traveling, and being outdoors. What makes us different is that we are a lesbian couple. We are not activists by nature. You have never seen us at protests or marching in parades. Up until this point, we have taken the typical passive approach of voting for candidates that represent our viewpoints and directing our charitable donations to organizations whose missions we support. We live in a liberal community, where we have always felt safe, comfortable, and accepted.

Certainly over the years there have been times when our sexuality has been an issue, but they have been relatively minor. We had to hire a lawyer to ensure both of our names were on our children's birth certificates, to protect our rights to inherit each others assets, and establish medical durable power of attorney. Luckily, we had the financial means to pay the thousands of dollars to do all of this. In the years that we have been in Colorado, laws have since been changed to protect some of these basic rights. We file our taxes as single. We filled out our census as 'unmarried partners living together' since we are not able to legally marry. Upon returning from vacation, US Customs would not process us together because we 'did not qualify as a family'. These are things that gay and lesbian people deal with every day.

Recently, we found ourselves in the middle of a political firestorm. We went to enroll our oldest child in kindergarten at Sacred Heart of Jesus School, and were told that our children would not be welcome to continue their education there long term because of our sexual orientation. This came as a shock to us because our children had been attending preschool at Sacred Heart for three years. We had been open about our family situation from the start, and had always felt welcomed by parents and teachers. The past weeks have been very difficult for our family. We were initially very hurt and angry. We met with school and church administrators to discuss the situation. We were told that families and students need to uphold church doctrine in order for children to be admitted. We were also told that our children would feel uncomfortable when taught about the "family unit", and teachers might feel too intimidated by their presence to teach church beliefs. Our answer to this is that there are many families that do not live their lives according to church doctrine. There are divorced parents, children of parents born out of wedlock, non-Catholics, and non-practicing Catholics. Their eligibility has not been questioned. There seems to be a subjective rating system of which sins are more unacceptable. Regarding the school's teaching about the 'family unit', we are unconcerned. Our children know that their family is different than most. They are well aware that many families have a mom and a dad, and we discuss different family models openly. We have a good understanding of the church's position on gay and lesbian people. We have never sought approval from the church of our relationship and we would never ask that the school modify its teachings to accommodate our family. We are not threatened by our children hearing different points of view on any issues. Perhaps our biggest objection to the School's decision is that we think that it is wrong to punish a child for who the child's parents are. We do not think that this reflects what Jesus would have done. Jesus said, "bring the children to me."

Our initial thought was that it would be least disruptive for our children to deal with this privately, and focus our energy on securing other educational options for them. However, word of our situation got out to the Sacred Heart community at a teacher staff meeting and quickly spread. Many people at Sacred Heart were outraged with the decision. A teacher reported it to the local news outlets. We found our story on the front page of the paper and in the headlines of the local news. It quickly spread nationally and has been the subject of many online blogs. We have chosen to speak up at this time to clarify many misconceptions.

Some have suggested that we enrolled our children at Sacred Heart to make a political point. This could not be further from the truth. We were both born and raised in the Catholic faith. One of us went to Catholic school from preschool through high school, and the other attended a prestigious Catholic University. Our children's grandmother and aunt were catholic school teachers for many years. Furthermore, our children are Catholics. They have both been baptized, and we take them to church regularly at Sacred Heart. When we were allowed to have our children baptized (as recommended by the 2006 document 'Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care'), we made a promise to raise our children in the Catholic faith. We now feel like our attempts at fulfilling this promise are being undermined by the Church itself. Although we do not see eye to eye with the Catholic Church on the issue of gay and lesbian relationships, we value what a Catholic education can offer our children from an academic, religious, and moral standpoint. As parents, our number one priority is and always has been the well-being of our children. We would never intentionally seek to further our own political beliefs at their expense.

Clearly this is an issue that strikes a nerve for many people. If any good can come out of all of this, perhaps it is getting people thinking and discussing issues of faith and sexual orientation. Our case is not unique. There are many other gay couples who have families and are struggling to reconcile their sexual orientation with their religious beliefs. We do not believe that homosexuality and organized religion need to be mutually exclusive. We have been touched by the outpouring of support from the Sacred Heart community and the community at large. Many of the people who stood up for us publicly did so at some risk to themselves and their families. We are humbled by their courage. We hope that in the future when we witness an injustice, we are brave enough to stand up to it like so many people did for us.

Our family will persevere. We have well-adjusted, intelligent, beautiful children who are deeply loved. We have chosen to move forward with our lives, not with hearts filled with hate and bitterness, but with hope that in part due to this controversy there might be some positive changes in the hearts and minds of others. It is easy to have ideas and opinions when they are abstract. When you meet the real people you are judging, you sometimes see things differently. We never intended consciously for our family to be active gay rights advocates, but by living happy, successful lives it appears that is what we have become. We will continue to raise our children with strong Catholic values and hold faith that through our actions, we are doing our part to create a more loving, inclusive world.

*To learn more about community response to this issue, please visit [boulderpride.org](http://boulderpride.org) or call 303-499-5777*