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Set the Record Straight

By Joseph Zwilling
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New York Newsday's story on Father Bernard Lynch ["Gay NY Priest's Road to a Lonely Exile in London," Feb. 16] makes two very serious mistakes.

Father Lynch is not now, nor has he ever been, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York. Father Lynch is a native of Ireland, and a member of a religious order founded and headquartered in Ireland, the Society of African Missions. He was never employed by the Archdiocese; he worked as a chaplain for a brief period at a high school run by another religious order, not the Archdiocese of New York. As a member of the Society of African Missions, Father Lynch is answerable to his order, and his order is responsible for the support of Father Lynch. If Father Lynch is on a leave of absence, it is from his order, not from the Archdiocese.

The story also misrepresents the teaching of the Catholic Church concerning homosexuality. The Church teaches that a homosexual orientation is not sinful, despite what your story says; homosexual activity, like any sexual activity outside marriage, is sinful. In 1986, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith wrote: "Although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is a more or less strong tendency toward an intrinsic moral evil" - that is, towards sexual activity outside of marriage. The Congregation went on to say that "special concern and pastoral attention should be directed" toward homosexual persons, to help them understand that homosexual activity is not a morally appropriate lifestyle, and to help them live within the teachings of the Church. In the Archdiocese of New York we have founded an organization, Courage, to assist those homosexual persons who are striving to live within the teachings of the Church.

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