

Vincent adds new twist to LGBT debate

BY LIM YI HAN

ACTIVIST Vincent Wijesingha has hit out against the Catholic Church and its stand on homosexuality, alleging that a priest tried to molest him when he was 15 and showed him pornographic magazines.

In a strongly worded post on his Facebook page, he wrote: “I haven’t till now disclosed this sorry incident publicly. It never seemed momentous and so far as I’m aware, it didn’t damage me. But Archbishop William Goh’s pronouncements this weekend prompted me to.”

His post came two days after the Catholic Church stated its stand on the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) issue.

In an open letter published on the Catholic News website, Catholic Archbishop Goh maintained that the family – comprising a father, mother and children – remains the basic building block of society, and that LGBT sexual relationships are not “in accordance with the plan of God” and “should not be promoted by Catholics”.

But Dr Wijesingha, 44, a former Singapore Democratic Party member, argued that the Catholic leadership “has no authority whatsoever, moral or otherwise, to comment on whom I can and cannot love”.

“The universal church is guilty of the systematic rape and abuse of children committed to the care



GOING PUBLIC: Dr Wijesingha alleged that a priest tried to molest him when he was 15 and showed him pornographic magazines. PHOTO: THE NEW PAPER

of a clergy ostensibly vowed to celibacy,” he said. “While not as extensive as other dioceses, the local church in Singapore is not exempt. Some years ago, it was embroiled in a scandal involving a historical allegation of sexual abuse by a priest.”

In response, the Archdiocese Communications Office said: “The Church’s stand on sexuality should not be distorted. The intent of our message is to clarify to (the Catholics) its position with regard to the family from the perspective of faith in Christ and His Church, and not to engage in a debate on the issue of LGBT purely on the level of reason.”

Several priests contacted by My Paper declined to comment, but one said that Catholics should “follow the teachings of the Church, and not the example of the priest” if he has done wrong.

Carol Balhetchet, senior direc-

tor of youth services of Singapore Children’s Society, who is a Catholic, added: “I’m really sorry that it happened to Vincent, if it’s true. It could be very traumatic, my heart goes out to him. But an action of one person should not reflect negatively on the whole cohort or religion.”

Meanwhile, the Fellowship of Muslim Students Association expressed its support for the Wear White campaign.

The campaign was launched by an Islamic religious teacher to get Muslims to wear white on Saturday to protest against the Pink Dot event by the LGBT community on that day to promote “the freedom to love”.

The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore advised mosque staff against being confrontational or vilifying those who lead a LGBT lifestyle or who attend the Pink Dot event.

limyihan@sph.com.sg