

Miss California Keeps Crown

✖ Christian beauty queen Carrie Prejean will be allowed to keep her Miss California title despite controversy over revealing photos recently leaked online and her support for traditional marriage.

Donald Trump, co-owner of the Miss Universe Organization, made the announcement today during a press conference in New York.

"We've really studied these photos," he said. "We've made a determination that everything we've seen to date that she's done ... the pictures taken were acceptable, were fine."

Trump's decision allows Prejean to continue her duties as Miss California. On Monday, pageant officials appointed runner-up Tami Farrell as the pageant ambassador, saying Prejean had been "unavailable" to make scheduled appearances for the organization though she had appeared at events at her church and for various pro-family groups, including the National Organization for Marriage .

During the press conference today, Prejean thanked God for trusting her "with this large task" but said she had been "punished" for exercising her free speech rights.

She said she is not an activist for traditional marriage. "Let me be clear: I am not an activist or anything, nor do I have a personal agenda," she said. "I was thrown into this firestorm from the time I was asked a question on stage. I have become an advocate for the importance of not redefining marriage based on my own upbringing and beliefs."

Prejean, a student at San Diego Christian College, has been under fire since the Miss USA pageant on April 19, when judge Perez Hilton asked her whether other states should follow Vermont in legalizing gay marriage. Prejean said she believed marriage should be between a man and a woman, a response that

may have cost her the Miss USA title.

Trump defended Prejean Tuesday, saying her response to Hilton's question was "the same answer the president of the United States gave" and reflects the views of "many people," the Associated Press reported.

Since the pageant, Christians have rallied around Prejean, applauding her stand for traditional marriage. The Gospel Music Association allowed her to introduce Mercy Me during the Dove Awards on April 23, and the Family Research Council invited her to speak at the upcoming Values Voter Summit.

Shanna Moakler, co-director of the Miss California pageant, said Prejean's contract requires her to obtain written permission to participate in such activities. "No one knows the difference between the comments, endorsements and activities of Carrie Prejean from those of the Miss California/USA title," Moakler said during a press conference Monday.

Prejean's Christian support continued even after photos surfaced of Prejean posing topless in lingerie with her back to the camera. Moakler said the photos, taken when Prejean was 17, represented a breach of contract because Miss California participants must disclose whether they have ever posed nude or semi-nude.

Prejean said Tuesday that a friend took the photos for a modeling application and she did not consider them published. In a previous statement, Prejean said the photos were leaked as part of an "intolerant and offensive" attack on her "and others who speak in defense of traditional marriage."

On Monday and Tuesday, Prejean appeared as a guest on James Dobson's *Focus on the Family* radio broadcast. Dobson said Prejean regrets taking the photos and applauded her for putting "her belief in traditional marriage and her moral

principles above her long-standing desire to win the Miss USA title."

"Carrie is deeply committed to Jesus Christ and is paying a high price for her faith," he said. "Carrie has steadfastly defended marriage between a man and a woman, in the face of crushing criticism."

Some of Prejean's Christian supporters, however, have questioned the high profile she has been given in the last three weeks.

"I really don't get some of my fellow Christians trying to turn her into some sort of modern day Mother Teresa," wrote Randy Thomas, executive vice president of Exodus International, on his blog. "I am so proud of her for standing up for marriage. She deserves major props for that. However ... Did you see the bikini she wore that very same fateful night?"

National Organization for Marriage President Maggie Gallagher, however, defended Prejean despite the photos.

"Of course Carrie is not perfect," Gallagher said. "On a personal note, as a former unwed mother, I want to say to Americans: you don't have to be a perfect person to have the right to stand up for marriage."