



# *Archdiocese of Newark*

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

August 31, 2016

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The mission of every Catholic school is to provide young people with a quality academic education grounded in and centered on authentic Catholic teaching and practices. Catholic education is an important ministry that supports and furthers the mission of the Church. The teaching mission of the Church comes from Christ Himself.

All involved in the ministry of Catholic education, regardless of the positions they may have or the duties and responsibilities they shoulder, are charged with forming young people into witnesses to Christ and opening their hearts to the spiritual transformation given by the Holy Spirit. By their words and by their lives, they teach. All are exemplars of the statement attributed to St. Francis: "Preach the Gospel. Use words if necessary." Consequently, all involved in the ministry of Catholic education are required to conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with the discipline, norms and teachings of the Catholic Church. In acknowledgement of that requirement, they accept and sign a Ministerial Agreement and Code of Conduct. They oblige themselves to promote and foster authentic Catholic beliefs and practices – even if they themselves are not Catholic. Every teacher, every administrator, every staff member in our Catholic schools teaches the students with whom he or she interacts about living according to the Faith of the Church.

In recent days, there has been much media reporting regarding a guidance counselor at Paramus Catholic who was terminated when it was learned that she was involved in a same-sex union. In our Catholic faith, marriage is between a man and a woman. A same-sex union violates the tenets of the Catholic faith.

Every religious organization has the right to promote and define its own identity, mission and message. Every religious organization has the right to ensure that people in that religious organization support and promote its beliefs and teachings. When someone involved in Catholic education ministry offers a public counter-witness to Catholic teaching, he or she does not teach the Truth or further the mission of the Church. Such actions can create confusion and uncertainty in the moral formation of the young people he or she encounters. When that happens, the Church must be free to take corrective steps to maintain the identity and the integrity of her mission. This right is protected by the United States Constitution as well as federal and state law.

With respect to its teachers and administrators, the Church acts on facts. When credible evidence comes to its attention that an employee is violating the tenets of the Catholic faith, it is compelled to investigate and take appropriate action. In the matter

*Archdiocesan Center*

August 31, 2016

Page 2

now before the court, certain facts were made known to school and Archdiocesan officials.

It seems that many have equated, mistakenly, the Church's position of welcoming sinners (for we are all sinners) with the notion that we accept teaching and lifestyles contrary to the principles of our faith that can create scandal in our Church. Much has been said in recent days about respect, diversity, and mercy. I agree that these qualities are important to the mission of the Catholic Church, especially through the ministry of Catholic education. Every person deserves to be treated with dignity, to be given respect, and to be shown the qualities of mercy. For decades I have taught and written that the Church welcomes everyone and invites everyone to participate in the life of the Church to the degree that they honestly can, while sincerely respecting the teachings of the Church. The invitation to join in the life of the Church does not include an invitation to alter or redefine what the Church believes and teaches, nor is it an invitation to allow others to define the identity, mission and message of the Church.

Even Jesus recognized that some people could not or would not accept His teaching. He was saddened when they walked away from Him, but He never altered His teaching. Nor shall we do so today.

With kindest personal regards, I am

Sincerely in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John J. Myers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

✠Most Reverend John J. Myers  
Archbishop of Newark

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