



Special Task Force for Catholic Schools Publishes Its Ministerial Covenant Report with Recommendations

Seattle, August 11, 2021 – Today the Archdiocese of Seattle’s Ministerial Covenant Task Force publicized its recommendations to address the ministerial covenant signed by teachers, presidents and principals employed at archdiocesan Catholic schools. These recommendations were developed over the past year by the 10-member volunteer task force, which was led by Father Ronald Nuzzi, professor emeritus at the University of Notre Dame.

“We consulted broadly, communicating with dozens of other dioceses about their policies, including several similar in size to Seattle, and with colleagues in Ireland, Canada, Australia, the U.K. and Germany,” said Father Nuzzi. “We developed a survey and received nearly 5,000 responses from parents, students, teachers, principals, alumni, priests and the larger Catholic community. Overall, I am confident that we thoroughly addressed the nuances involved in this topic.”

The Process

The volunteer members were appointed to the task force in August of 2020 and met monthly for one year to review, study, discuss and articulate the official teaching and tradition of the Catholic Church. They analyzed and summarized the understanding, convictions, beliefs and opinions of a variety of archdiocesan stakeholders regarding the ministerial covenant and its use in employment decisions, which led to the development of their recommendations about the ministerial covenant.

“I’m so grateful for the diligence and care the team put into every step of this important process,” said Archbishop Paul D. Etienne. “Their recommendations and corresponding reasoning for each are clearly articulated. I am now going to carefully review each recommendation and seek other input and counsel, before discerning next steps. I ask that you all pray for the Holy Spirit’s guidance in this matter.”

Recommendation Overview

The task force noted that its work was rooted in two guiding principles:

- “We believe that it should always and everywhere be clear in all education and formation programs that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God and thus should be treated and respected according to this inherent dignity.”
- “We affirm that all forms of unjust discrimination, prejudice, or violent attack upon individuals because of their sexual orientation or identity are utterly incompatible with the message of the Gospel and have no place in Catholic schools or parishes.”

After outlining its guiding principles, as well as its summary statement of Church teaching, research process and data results, the task force presented a series of recommendations that fell within four key categories:

1. the need to expand formation programs;
2. the need to re-establish pastoral care ministries for LGBTQ youth;
3. the need for clarification of leadership and administrative responsibilities for Catholic school principals and presidents; and
4. the need to reconsider the content, language and operationalization of the current ministerial covenant, particularly its lifestyle provision.

“We had strong and unanimous agreement on the first three recommendation categories, all of which aim at a deeper unity of mission from different perspectives,” said Father Nuzzi. “Specifically, this included detailing the need for comprehensive formation, LGBTQ ministries and revised covenants for principals and presidents.”

“While the group was divided about the presence of the lifestyle provision in the ministerial covenant, they were united in wanting to keep a covenant in place rather than standard employment contracts,” he said.

To read about the full process and the public report please visit the [Ministerial Covenant Task Force landing page](#). You can also read the Ministerial Covenant Task Force Final Report [here](#).

About the Archdiocese of Seattle

The Archdiocese of Seattle encompasses all of Western Washington, stretching from Canada to Oregon and from the Cascade Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. There are 72 Catholic schools, 174 parishes, missions and pastoral centers in the archdiocese, with more than 500 weekly Masses celebrated in eight languages. Archbishop Paul D. Etienne leads the archdiocese with his auxiliary bishop, Bishop Eusebio Elizondo. For more information about the Archdiocese of Seattle, visit archseattle.org.

###

Media Contact: Helen McClenahan
Helen.mcclenahan@seattlearch.org | Media line: 206-402-9373