



20 January 2016

Dear Educators, Parents and Parishioners of the Archdiocese,

Over the past week, there has been much publicity about the guidelines put forward by the Minister of Education David Eggen on school protocols regarding LGBTQ students and staff, and the reaction to these by Bishop Henry of Calgary. This took me back to the earlier legislation of Bill 10 and the response that this drew from Alberta Catholic bishops and the Alberta Catholic School Trustees Association (ACSTA). At that time, I wrote to you by way of my response.

At this time, I wish simply to reiterate as succinctly as possible much of what I said then. I speak here of course not as a politician or a social psychologist but as a faith leader in our Catholic community. I call on each and every one of you to consider the following:

- Throughout its long history, the Catholic Church has been dedicated to the education and formation of persons not only in matters of faith, but also in what it means to be a human being, created in love by a caring God.
- Along with this tradition is the conviction that parents are the first and primary educators of their children. Schools do not replace parents, but are of great assistance to parents in the education of their children.
- All students entrusted to our care are worthy of respect and dignity. Many characteristics and skills set students apart from one another; this is true of society generally. There can be no disrespect or shaming of persons because of personal characteristics.
- As a publicly funded system, the Catholic schools of Alberta must respond to legislation concerning education, but must do so in a way that is consistent with Catholic belief and practice.
- The Church teaches, under an authority that is greater than herself, that humans are created “in the image and likeness of God ... male and female he created them”. The Church believes that one’s physiological gender is not arbitrary, but determines the identity that we grow into. This process of growth in identity must be respected.

We, the Alberta bishops, believe that this matter is of great importance and is worthy of our attention. The ACSTA has proposed for Catholic schools a protocol that it has called the LIFE Framework. I believe that this document respects the spirit and intention of government legislation, while doing so in a way suited to Catholic education.

I am attaching to this letter a recent press release from the ACSTA. I support its clear and concise dealing with the matter. If you have further concerns, I encourage you to address these to the Minister of Education, your local MLA, or the ACSTA.

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "+ Gerard Pettipas, C.Ss.R." with a small flourish at the end.

Most Rev. Gerard Pettipas, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan