



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

24 February 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The recent dismissal of an Archdiocesan employee, Mr. Mark Guevarra, from your parish of St. Albert has prompted some parishioners to write to me with their concerns and questions. It is clear that this matter has caused pain for many people, especially since Mark is widely loved and respected in the parish. I am writing to offer some necessary clarifications.

Recent media reports respecting Mr. Guevarra have made a number of assertions regarding the reasons for the termination of his employment. I assure you that this decision was taken solely and strictly in relation to our employment policy. Anyone employed by the Archdiocese of Edmonton to serve in a leadership or teaching role is expected to live in accord with the teaching of the Church. This requirement arises from the mission of the Church in which the employee participates, the nature of Christian faith itself, and the manner by which that faith is handed on to others. By the act of faith, we surrender the entirety of our lives, in trusting obedience, to God and his sacred teachings. The Church's mission to hand on the faith is fulfilled not only by our words but also by the witness of our lives that conform to the faith we profess. All employees of the Archdiocese give written consent to this expectation when they sign our *Code of Ethics and Accountability*.

Among the Church's teachings that our employees in pastoral ministry are expected to uphold are those pertaining to marriage, family and sexuality. It is perhaps helpful briefly to recall the Church's doctrine here, since on these matters our culture now holds positions at odds with the teaching of the Church. This can cause confusion for many people. Indeed, some parishioners who wrote to me wondered when the Church will change her teaching to be in accord with "the times."

The duty of the Church is to proclaim the Gospel to the times in which she lives, not to become their echo. Her teaching does not change simply because societal norms do. Therefore, the Church teaches, and will continue to teach, that marriage is intended by God as a permanent union of covenant love between one man and one woman, who, in their sexual relations, give expression to their mutual love and their openness to the gift of life.

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Sexual activity that departs from this norm is contrary to the will of God and, therefore, not in keeping with our Catholic faith. As regards people who are attracted to persons of the same sex, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* stipulates that those who experience same-sex attraction are to be “accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity” (CCC, 2358).

Of course, much more can be said about these matters. I encourage parishioners, parents and students who have questions around these issues to take time to study the Church's teachings and to raise their concerns openly, honestly and respectfully with their pastors and teachers. In this way, we can all grow in our understanding of each other and of our Catholic faith.

With the assurance of my prayer for God's blessings upon you and your families, especially during this holy season of Lent, I am,

Yours sincerely in Christ,



✠Richard W. Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton