

# A Jesuit Break from the Church?

Dr. Lawrence V. McCrobie, Ed.D.

This past week has been met with a great deal of tension between the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and a High School operated by the Midwestern Province of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). Brebeuf Preparatory School in Indianapolis has met Archbishop Charles Thompson's called to terminate a teacher from employment due to the direct contradiction to Catholic teaching. Shortly after Bishop Thompson was named to the seat of Indianapolis, he became aware of the situation brewing. In a press conference held on June 27, 2019 at the Cathedral in Indy, Archbishop Thompson stated that the mission, whenever a situation arises, is to begin a process of reconciliation with the involved parties [in this case Brebeuf] to bring them back in line with the teachings of the Church—which is his responsibility in Central and Southern Indiana. Principal Greg VanSlambrook and leaders of the Jesuit High School decided to ignore the Archbishop's request citing that they [the Archdiocese] had no right to interfere with the Catholic High School operations.



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Understanding that the Jesuit community is in fact in Communion with the Chair of St Peter, the Bishop of Rome—it might come as a surprise to the leadership of the High School and the Jesuit community that the Apostolic successor put in place by our Holy Father Pope Francis does indeed have an obligation to abide by directives of the Archbishop. If not for obvious reasons, then certainly for their Apostolate Governing Structure.

The Jesuit community was founded by Ignatius of Loyola and approved by Pope Paul III in 1540 [founded 1534]. The Jesuits took the traditional three vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty; however, the Jesuits began taking a fourth vow of obedience to the Pope. The text of the vow is: *(...) I further promise special obedience to the sovereign pontiff in regard to the missions, according to the same Apostolic Letters and the Constitutions.* (Constitutions S.J., N°527). In understanding that the Jesuits take this fourth vow, it is quite odd that the leadership of the Indianapolis High School would directly defy the request of the Archbishop of Indianapolis. Archbishop Thompson was selected by a Jesuit Pope to fill the vacant see of Indianapolis. Pope Francis chose Thompson because of his excellent leadership in Evansville, and because of his defense of Catholic Church teachings [Archbishop Thompson received a Licentiate in Canon Law from St Paul in Canada].

To go against the Archbishop on the part of the Jesuits might, in some eyes, be given some merit; though it has none. But for the

Midwestern Province of the Society of Jesus to go against their vow of obedience to the Supreme Pontiff is an entirely different matter. This is precisely the point that Archbishop Thompson is making. We must defend and uphold Church teachings, just as we must support and defend the monastic vows that the religious take in service to God. The high school leadership should recognize that Archbishop Thompson is the shepherd of Central and Southern Indiana, and by that position must defend the Church teachings, not to condemn the individual, but rather to uphold the teachings of the church which, in this case, is the understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage being defined as between One Man and One Woman.

Those employed in Catholic Institutions, which Brebeuf is part of as an Apostolate of the Roman Catholic Church, must be the first line of defense—and in many cases, the most durable line—in maintain the teachings of the Church. When individuals enter into a state of life that is contrary to those teachings, they must acknowledge that they can no longer function as a minister of the Church in the capacity of passing on the teachings, as they are directly violating what they are teaching. Although individuals will question those who go against other Catholic teachings but are not called upon to be fired, Archbishop Thompson explained that it is “not a witch hunt.” The Archdiocese of Indianapolis is not out to find and persecute anyone, they want to work with those who are in tension and conflict with Church teachings to “walk with them” and to try and find a way to get them where the Church is calling them to be.

The Church must have a strong foundation that starts in our Catholic Schools. That begins with our teachers as ministers, and that is protected by [in Central and Southern Indiana] by Archbishop Charles Thompson.



Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School in Indianapolis has defied the Archdiocese of Indianapolis by refusing to remove a teacher who is married to someone of the same sex.