

INTERNAL DOCUMENT ONLY

May 31, 2017

Dear Brother Priests,

As you know, staff of our School Office and our Youth Office recently presented a program on a Pastoral Process of Accompaniment and Dialogue. They reviewed a document designed to be a tool for priests, school principals and other parish leaders who encounter situations involving the acceptance of children from nontraditional families into Catholic schools and programs. The document also provides guidance for addressing gender-related issues that may affect a child's enrollment in parish programs. In the Diocese of Jefferson City, we have not been strangers to these issues, though some may believe they should not be a matter of concern for a primarily rural diocese such as ours.

I support the development and presentation of this program that promotes our Catholic moral teachings and supports the role of the pastor to act in the best interests of the people of his parish.

In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis noted that the recent Synod of Bishops contemplated the "situation of families whose members include persons who experience same-sex attraction, a situation not easy either for parents or for children." (*A.L.*, No. 250) He states that "such families should be given respectful pastoral guidance, so that those who manifest a homosexual orientation can receive the assistance they need to understand and fully carry out God's will in their lives." (*Id.*) This program of accompaniment and dialog is fully in accord with these words of our Pope, in that it provides an opportunity and a guide for a pastoral response to same-sex families, as well as other nontraditional families, who seek to have their children enrolled in our schools and other parish programs.

Since the program's presentation, the Diocese, the program presenters and I, personally, have been pilloried on various social media blogs, newsletters, and in email campaigns. We have been accused of violating Church teaching with respect to sex and gender, supporting transgender accommodations that would allow children to use the bathrooms of their choice, and mandating that parishes enroll children of nontraditional families in Catholic schools and programs regardless of the desires of the local parish leaders. Such allegations are incorrect and proving to be confusing and even agitating to some of our faithful.

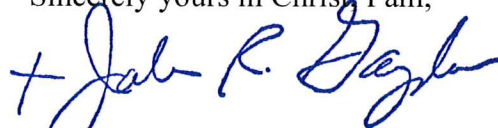
At this point, nearly all the public furor is coming from outside of our Diocese--in fact, outside the state of Missouri! Nevertheless, many of our Catholic faithful will soon become aware of these falsehoods and get upset or agitated. We are now experiencing some local response in Columbia and Jefferson City.

I am writing you to make you aware of this misinformation campaign and ask for your support in combating it. Father Joseph Corel, V.G., is leading our effort to respond to the concerns of people who contact the Diocese, in addition to responding to any media inquiries.

Please feel free to communicate with your parish as you see fit. We can also assist you in responding to parishioners and other local constituencies who have questions and concerns about the accompaniment and dialog process. If needed, Sister Elizabeth Youngs, our superintendent of schools, Sister Julie Brandt, associate superintendent, John DeLaporte, youth ministry coordinator, or Father Corel are available to meet with you or parish groups that want to discuss it.

I thank you for your help and your prayers in this matter, as well as for those you offer for me as I continue to recuperate here in St. Louis.

Sincerely yours in Christ, I am,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John R. Gaydos". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend John R. Gaydos
Bishop of Jefferson City

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