

STMA and the Archdiocese agree to disagree

After two years of study and negotiation, the archdiocese of Baltimore, and Saint Thomas More Academy concluded that they are unable to reach agreement to have STMA recognized as a Catholic school within the Archdiocese. The primary issue which could not be resolved is the requirement by the Archdiocese to initiate into the classroom curriculum the "Catechesis for Human Sexuality." STMA, founded in 2000 with 4 students has now grown to 140 students and occupies its own new facility in Buckeystown. Since its founding, STMA has taught in the Catholic tradition, which holds that sex education is the responsibility of the parent. STMA bases its position on the "Pontifical Guidelines on Chastity." In an effort to reach a compromise, STMA suggested adopting the "Chastity" program used in the Harrisburg dioceses and a number of surrounding dioceses. In his letter to the STMA board, Dr. Ronald Valenti, Superintendent of Catholic Schools, cites the authority of the Catholic Center in Baltimore in requiring "no deviation in Archdiocesan policy."

STMA wishes to thank the Archbishop and Dr Valenti for the two year effort which included a 3 day inspection/visit of the school by a committee of the Department of Catholic Education Ministries. Subsequent to the inspection, the review committee issued a highly complimentary report citing the strong Catholic atmosphere throughout the STMA community and the "strong recommendation" that STMA be recognized as a Catholic school. The report also made recommendations for improvements in certain areas that are being addressed by the school. A file of the documents and correspondence relating to our process is available to all interested parties.

STMA remains committed to the values and canons of the Catholic Church, and is especially appreciative that the Archdiocese now expresses that "Although the regular presence of our parish priest *in* the school is welcomed, they are not there in a supervisory or monitoring role, but purely pastoral." STMA also welcomes the presence of our local parish priests, and will make every effort to accommodate their pastoral mission.