

San Francisco teachers' union describes 'great distress' among members

by [Dan Morris-Young](#) | *Mar. 24, 2015*

San Francisco faculty handbooks

The executive board of the teachers' union representing the San Francisco archdiocese's four high schools sent [a letter describing "great distress"](#) and "significant division, discontent, doubt and fear" among its members to administrators of three of the four schools.*

In response to "your recent distribution to all faculty members of the annual letters of intent to return," the letter said the "turmoil resulting from the archbishop's proposed changes to the [faculty] handbook," and the collective bargaining agreement has led to "many of our colleagues ... considering other career options," according to a copy of the statement sent to Gary Cannon, principal of Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory in San Francisco.

Union officials told *NCR* that similar letters were being sent to leaders at Marin Catholic in Kentfield and to Junipero Serra in San Mateo. Annual intent-to-return letters had not been mailed yet from Archbishop Riordan High School in San Francisco, they said.

The archdiocese owns and operates those four schools. Ten other Catholic high schools in the archdiocese are private and/or sponsored by religious communities.

[Controversy erupted and continues](#) in the Bay Area following the Feb. 3 release of a statement developed by Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone for inclusion into the four schools' 2015-16 faculty handbooks.

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It outlined areas of church teaching and practice Cordileone said needed more clarity and emphasis, and it cautioned "administrators, faculty and staff of any faith or no faith ... to

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arrange and conduct their lives so as not to visibly contradict, undermine or deny" church tenets.

The union leaders' concerns were echoed in a March 2 letter to Cordileone signed by 21 retired priests of the archdiocese.

"We feel that ... consultation and collegiality, deeply rooted in our local church, has not been followed in your initiative regarding the teachers of the Catholic High Schools of the Archdiocese," the senior priests wrote. "Most initiatives and actions elicit both positive and negative reactions. By far, the majority of responses we have heard have been negative. They do not challenge that Catholic doctrine should be part of a Catholic high school's curriculum, nor that teachers should respect the school's Catholic identity. The objections focus mainly on the lack of sufficient consultation, on the manner of presentation, on the wording, and on the question of the need for such a document."

The union's letter asked Cannon to forward the text to SHCP president Christian Br. Ronald Gallagher as well as to the archdiocesan superintendent of schools, Maureen Huntington, "in hopes that the archbishop himself may get a sense of the real and potential impact of his actions."

"While the majority of your faculty employees might be returning those letters as usual signed with their official intent to return," the union letter stated, "an indeterminate number of them may at some time in the near future renege on that declaration in favor of alternate employment."

Meanwhile, Cordileone invited priests of the archdiocese to meet with him from 1 to 3 p.m. Tuesday at St. Mary of the Assumption Cathedral in San Francisco to foster "presbyteral unity and brotherhood" and discuss "as a current issue of the moment ... the Teacher Contract/Handbook issue."

In announcing the gathering, Cordileone said he would "deliver some comments and give some perspective on what has transpired." He encouraged advance submissions of questions.

In other developments in the archdiocese:

- The Gubbio Project, an outreach program for the homeless that includes their sleeping on pews of St. Boniface Church, [announced it would meet with Auxiliary Bishop William Justice](#) to discuss ways to cooperate on ministry to the homeless in the wake of the controversy over revelation that the cathedral had installed a sprinkler system to discourage transients from sleeping in its doorways.

- Justice and Fr. Raymond Reyes, the archdiocesan vicar for clergy, are scheduled to meet with an organization of parents and alumni of Star of the Sea School on Wednesday to discuss tension between the school community and parish priests over a ban on altar girls, distribution of inappropriate materials to school children, confusion over the school faculty future, and other issues.
- The organization [Concerned Students and Parents: Teach Acceptance](#) announced it will sponsor a March 30 procession and vigil. The procession will begin at 6 p.m. at Mission Dolores Church and move to the cathedral, where a 7 p.m. "peaceful vigil" will include presentation of a petition it has promoted, "[We Call Upon Archbishop Cordileone to Teach Acceptance](#): Withdraw proposed language from the contract & handbook."

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