

## Labor leaders, union members join rally against Cordileone's new handbook language

by [Mandy Erickson](#) | *Apr. 28, 2015*

San Francisco faculty handbooks

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**SAN FRANCISCO --** Labor leaders and union members joined teachers, parents and students from archdiocesan high schools here Monday to rally against Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone's proposal to change aspects of their employment.

Gathering in front of the archdiocesan offices at 1 Peter Yorke Way, a crowd of more than 200 protested the archbishop's plan to reclassify the teachers as "ministers," thereby providing them with fewer legal protections, and to [insert a morality clause into their handbook](#).

The morality clause condemns same-sex marriage, contraception and use of reproductive technology, among other things, and expects employees to accept "these truths" outside the workplace.

"The church has told us that it honors all civil rights and labor rights," said Art Pulaski, chief officer of the California Labor Federation, speaking before the crowd gathered in the blocked-off street. "You cannot profess social justice if within your own walls you refuse to practice it. We call on the archbishop to adhere to the principles of social justice."

The morality clause and minister reclassification would affect teachers and staff members at four high schools: Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory and Archbishop Riordan High School\* in San Francisco, Junipero Serra High School in San Mateo, and Marin Catholic High School in Kentfield.

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In February, the archdiocese released the morality clause, which is under the purview of the archbishop and not subject to contract

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negotiations between the archdiocese and the teachers union.\*\* Since then, students, teachers and parents have denounced the changes with demonstrations, rallies and a petition signed by more than 80 percent of teachers at the four schools.

On Monday, the archdiocese released a statement saying that the archbishop met with administrators from the high schools to stress that he has no intention to fire teachers. "The men and women who have been called to a career in Catholic education, and who serve our schools and students with distinction, have our greatest admiration and respect," the statement said.

"There will be no 'witch hunts,' no prying into people's personal lives, no shaming, no hidden agendas," it added. "This is something the Archdiocese has sought to make clear from the beginning."

Paul Hance, a history and English teacher at Serra and member of the executive board for the teachers union, questioned why the morality clause was necessary. "For 40 years, we've served loyally," he said in an interview before the rally, referring to the four decades the schools' teachers union has negotiated with the archdiocese.

"We've never needed this language before," he added. "We sincerely hope that the archbishop will not come to use this language."

Several speaking before the crowd said they felt the morality clause hurt LGBT students as well as those who were conceived through artificial means.

"We are with these kids, some fragile, hurt, lonely and questioning," said Peggy Farrell, an arts teacher at Serra. "This contract and handbook language drives a wedge" between the teachers and the archdiocese, she added. "The only way to heal this broken relationship is to drop the language."

Farrell joined other teachers in saying she prefers to teach at a Catholic school. "I know I uphold my contract," she said. "I teach Catholic values."

At the rally, teachers and labor representatives remembered Peter Yorke, a San Francisco priest and labor leader who died in 1925. They also sang, accompanied by a guitar and trumpet, "Teach acceptance is our call. Love your neighbor as yourself. For God loves us all."

"Teach acceptance" is the phrase the opponents of the archbishop's changes have adopted for their website, Facebook and T-shirts, worn by parents and students at the rally.

Representatives from two dozen labor unions attended the rally, many wearing their own T-shirts from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, National Union of Health Care Workers and others.

Fred Seavey of a health care workers union said he joined the rally "to support the teachers. It's unfair, the archbishop's position, wanting to control their home lives."

*\*An earlier version of this story named an incorrect school.*

*\*\*This sentence has been clarified.*

[Mandy Erickson is a freelance writer from the San Francisco Bay Area.]

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