



October 10, 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One of my chief priorities on behalf of the faithful of the Diocese of Arlington is ensuring the accessibility of authentic Catholic education for our young people. The Code of Canon Law names the Bishop as the person responsible for guaranteeing that the education provided at our Catholic schools is “based on the principles of Catholic doctrine” and that the teachers and curriculum uphold the teachings of the Church (Can. 803).

To ensure this authenticity of Catholic education, we have several policies in place that make certain the Catholic identity of a school is reflected in its mission and teaching. Included in these policies are a specific set of requirements that govern “private” Catholic schools – that is, schools which are recognized by the Diocese of Arlington as Catholic, but which are operated by independent groups and not by the Diocese or any of our parishes.

Notre Dame Academy in Middleburg has operated as one of these private, independent Catholic schools since 1965, when it was founded by the Sisters of Notre Dame of Chardon, Ohio. In 2000, the Sisters of Notre Dame sold the school to an independent Board of Trustees, which initially continued to operate it as a Catholic school according to Canon 803. For several years, the diocese and the school have enjoyed a very positive working relationship.

Recently, however, the Board of Trustees of Notre Dame Academy has voted to no longer comply with the policies we have in place to protect and uphold Catholic education, and they have advised me of that decision. Without compliance with these policies (particularly [Policy 910](#)), the Catholicity of the school and its curriculum cannot be ensured.

On October 8, I spoke with Mr. James Atkins, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, who reiterated the decision of Notre Dame to no longer observe our policies. Mr. Atkins also indicated that the Board of Trustees intends to amend the Articles of Incorporation for the school to delete the statement that it is a “Roman Catholic organization” functioning “in accordance with the traditions and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.” At the conclusion of our discussion, I informed him that I would have no choice but to announce that Notre Dame Academy can no longer identify itself as a Catholic school. This change will take effect on June 30, 2009. After that date, the school will no longer have the Blessed Sacrament reserved in its chapel and the diocese will not be able to guarantee the quality or authenticity of religious or other instruction.

Representatives of Notre Dame are no longer able to go to our elementary schools or parishes to recruit students. I have strongly suggested to Mr. Atkins that the Board of Trustees consider changing the name of the school. The title "Notre Dame" (Our Lady) is so closely associated with our Catholic faith that continued use of the name would undoubtedly be a cause of confusion to potential students and their families.

I am deeply disappointed that this formerly Catholic institution will no longer be counted among our Catholic schools, and that families in the western part of our diocese who wish to provide a Catholic high school education for their children will lose one option for doing so. I am encouraged, however, by the ongoing commitment of so many in our diocese as we work to provide faithful, excellent Catholic education to as many children as possible.

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Paul S. Loverde". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Paul S. Loverde
Bishop of Arlington