

The Right to Teach the Catholic Faith in Catholic Schools

Hi my name is Queenie Yu. I was born and raised in Toronto. My dad and mom immigrated from China and Hong Kong, respectively. I'd like to begin with a hypothetical scenario.

If my dad were to say one day that he would like to start a school so his grandchildren could be immersed in Chinese culture by spending a month in that school, he wouldn't hire me to be one of the teachers because I have never lived in China. I could do research and teach the kids in class, but to pass on a culture it's best done by someone who lives it because it's a way of life.

Similarly, the purpose of our Catholic schools is to transmit the teachings of the Catholic Church to students. To do so, we create a Catholic environment by hiring teachers who model the faith to students.

Section 93 of the Constitution (1867) guarantees the denominational rights of Catholic schools which means that Catholic schools have the right to transmit the teachings of the Catholic Church.

The Catholic faith is best taught by those who live it and who agree with all of the Church's teachings.

What about discrimination?

Section 15(1) of the Charter (1982) speaks about the equality of each individual but Section 29 of the Charter says that nothing in the Charter invalidates any rights guaranteed by the Constitution. In other words, the Charter doesn't invalidate the right that Catholic schools have to transmit the teachings of the Catholic Church.

The Ontario Human Rights Code (1990) speaks about freedom from discrimination but Section 19(1) affirms the rights and privileges that Catholic schools enjoy, which is mainly the right to transmit the teachings of the Catholic Church.

What about the Ontario Human Rights Commission?

They can bring matters up to the Human Rights Tribunal but the Commission doesn't have authority in law.

The Board's Code of Conduct does not have to include all the terms suggested by the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

In Fact, the Archdiocese wrote a beautiful statement which says:

All members of the school community must:

- Value and respect the teachings of the Catholic Church
- Respect and treat others fairly, as children of God, created in the image and likeness of God, of infinite dignity and worth.

This phrase unites us, includes all people – even those not covered by any of the proposed grounds (by the way, I was bullied as a kid because I was short, fat and didn't dress well which aren't included in the proposed grounds). It eliminates the need to continuously come back to the table to debate whether or not another label should be included. It doesn't compromise the objectives and purpose behind the Commission's policies, and it says why we shouldn't discriminate against anyone.

I'd like to ask all the trustees to support this statement for the Code of Conduct, and to support eliminating the terms of discrimination.

Thank you.