

Immaculate Conception Church
229 West Anthony Street
Celina, Ohio 45822-1608
(419) 586-6648



December 23, 2018

Dear IC Parishioner,

I pray that the peace and joy of Christmas may abound in your hearts and that the birth of the Christ Child may remind us of the many wonderful ways the “word made flesh” dwells among us each and every day.

Many of you may have read or heard about the December 17, 2018 Celina Board of Education meeting in which the board “approved developing a pilot program for a nondenominational religious instruction class for high school students.” You may have also heard a public portrayal by other Christian church members of my opposition to the program. I have been reserved in my public comments not wanting to cause further ecumenical frictions among our Celina area faith communities, but I also feel it is now important to share with you what my concerns are with the program and allow you to make your own decisions about the Release Time Bible Education (RTBE) called Bulldog Ethics.

While I affirm that Bible Education is a blessing for the community, especially our youth, I have hesitation with Kingdom Harvest Ministries (KHM), the organization which is the sponsoring non-profit agent for Bulldog Ethics in Celina. I also have concern if the tenets of our Catholic faith are being and will be respected.

KHM was born out of an effort called Revive Mercer County sponsored by a number of the Celina area churches. In July 2018, I and other pastors in Celina received a letter from KHM inviting us to participate in RTBE in Celina stating that “The Kingdom Harvest Ministry and Released Time Bible Education is supported by many of the local church leaders who participate in the Time To Revive Mercer County weekly meetings.”

When Revive was starting in Celina in the Fall of 2015, I was told by leaders that it was an ecumenical movement which I assumed in the best sense was respectful of faith traditions. It was later that I learned, and in some cases saw the livestream, of youth being told that their baptism as Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists and other faith traditions did not count and their previous understanding of faith did not matter. This is counter to the common agreement among many Christian churches that we respect one another's baptism and do not re-baptize. I had a number of conversations with concerned parents asking questions and confused youth. A couple of the other local pastors talked about families in their parish being torn apart or being led to Revive and then feeling spiritually lost again.

The other concern is if the (KHM) non-profit organization would be respectful of the role of Tradition in our Catholic faith. Their faith statement from the KHM website states "The inerrant Scripture (the 66 Books of the Bible) is the sole source of written divine revelation, which alone can bind the conscience. The Bible alone teaches all that is necessary for our salvation from sin and is the standard by which all Christian behavior must be measured. It is denied that any creed, council or individual may bind a Christian's conscience, that the Holy Spirit speaks independently of or contrary to what is set forth in the Bible, or that personal spiritual experience can ever be a vehicle of revelation." A significant part of our Catholic belief is based on creed, councils and teaching of the Magisterium - things like Marian feasts of the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption, our belief in the Saints, the Eucharist and sacraments of the Church to name just a few. My concern is whether or not KHM would not be respectful of these tenets of our Catholic Tradition when its Statement of Faith seems to question such beliefs.

While I believe that those behind KHM and Bulldog Ethics are striving for what they see as best for the youth of our community, I am dismayed that in their zeal they don't seem to understand the impact of previous experiences and that they are asking me as pastor and us as Catholics to associate with an organization that by its own faith statement denies part of who we are as Catholics.

My role as pastor is to care for the flock and provide guidance. It is with this understanding that I share my hesitations and concerns in this letter. It is my hope and prayer that Bulldog Ethics will be respectful of our Catholic faith tradition as well as all faith traditions and truly be ecumenical. While I have my hesitations and concerns, I understand and respect if IC parishioners choose to participate with their own caution and oversight.

I pray the "word made flesh" may truly dwell among us all this Christmas.

Christmas Blessings & prayers,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. Ken".

Fr. Ken Schnipke, C.P.P.S.
Pastor