



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on April 16, 2015

N.J. Teacher Reinstated After Suspension for “Anti-Gay” Facebook Posts

When Immaculata High School in Somerville, New Jersey, announced on April 10 it had reinstated a teacher who had been suspended for “anti-gay” Facebook comments, a statement issued by school director Monsignor Seamus Brennan declared: “By agreement with all parties involved, there will be no further comment on the issue.”



That has not, however, stopped those who are neither school personnel nor representatives of the formerly suspended teacher from offering post mortems on the controversy, including one from veteran Catholic journalist and author Phi Lawler. In an April 14 article on [Catholic Culture.org](#), Lawler wrote that while it is good that Patricia Jannuzzi (shown), a teacher at the school for 33 years, has been allowed to keep her job, her reinstatement should not be considered a “victory.”

“A gross injustice has been partially — partially — corrected,” Lawler wrote. “Still this should not be counted a victory. We have gained no ground in the battle to preserve marriage. We have only returned [to] status quo ante.”

Jannuzzi was suspended on March 13 after several of her Facebook postings against same-sex marriage and the “gay” political and social agenda created a highly publicized backlash that included an online petition from school alumni. In one post, [NJ.com reported](#), Jannuzzi responded to a news story about the fight against same-sex marriage in Nebraska by asking, “Why can’t the rest of the US be like this?? Why the insanity?” In another post, regarding an article about three lesbians living as married in Massachusetts, Jannuzzi asked “Between this and many Egyptian men being beheaded ... when will the evil stop?”

In another post, she suggested sexual orientation is a matter of choice rather than a genetic trait and dismissed as “bologna” the idea that “gay rights,” including same-sex marriage, are guaranteed by the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. In the same post, she also charged that “gay” activists are working toward the “extinction” of Western civilization.

The petition to “Stop Public Hate Speech of Teachers” gained national attention when it was endorsed by celebrities, including TV’s *Real Housewives of New Jersey* actor Greg Bennett, a 2004 graduate of Immaculata and former student of Jannuzzi. Movie star Susan Sarandon got in on the act, sharing an open letter to Jannuzzi on Facebook by Sarandon’s openly gay nephew, also a former Jannuzzi student.



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There was some confusion — and apparently some dissembling by the school and the Diocese of Metuchen — over the conditions put on the administrative leave ordered for Jannuzzi. The teacher's two children, believing that their mother's salary and benefits had been cut off, started an online fundraiser to help the family meet living expenses. The effort raised \$33,000 of its \$100,000 goal.

The diocese issued a statement, saying Jannuzzi had not been taken off the payroll. Yet a March 12 e-mail to Jannuzzi from Immaculata Principal Jean Kline said: "After further reflection and upon receiving the advice of the Advisory Council, Msgr Brennan and I have decided to place you on administrative leave without pay effective immediately." In another statement, the diocese disputed the fundraiser's claim that Jannuzzi would not be rehired for the next school year.

"In keeping with diocesan school policy, decisions for all teaching positions for the 2015-2016 academic year are made later in the spring," the statement claimed. "We are baffled and disappointed that there has been a website soliciting funds that is filled with misinformation." However, the lawyer who negotiated the teacher's return insisted the statement was not accurate.

"At every point in our discussions the diocesan lawyers told us repeatedly there was no way that Patricia Jannuzzi would ever come back to the Immaculata classroom under any possible scenario," attorney David Oakley told NJ.com. Oakley said the fundraiser had been terminated and the money would be returned to the donors.

"I am delighted with the understanding we reached with the school and I admire them for making a careful decision — and I couldn't be happier," Oakley said after Jannuzzi was reinstated. Yet the school had hardly made a ringing endorsement of a faculty member who has taught there for more than three decades. As Lawler noted, Monsignor Brennan's reference in his statement to Jannuzzi's "otherwise good reputation" implied that her published views about same-sex marriage and the "gay" agenda cast a pall on that reputation and that she was appropriately disciplined for it.

"Could she have made her points more elegantly?" wrote Lawler. "Sure; and so could virtually everyone else on Facebook. But she was not punished for inelegant prose; she was punished for opposing homosexual activists."

"It is the School's position that a Catholic school teacher must always communicate the faith in a way that is positive and never hurtful," according to the Monsignor, who may have forgotten some of the pointedly harsh and negative words the Gospels tell us Jesus hurled at those who made a show of upholding their religious faith, while loading burdens on the backs of those who make convenient scapegoats or sacrificial lambs. Msgr. Brennan seems to suffer from an affliction all too common among clergy these days: an inability to remember if they are disciples of Jesus Christ or Dale Carnegie.

"We are now and always have been united in our understanding and commitment to the teachings of the Catholic Church," the Monsignor said. That, unfortunately raises the question: How would Immaculata High be different if it were not committed to the teachings of the Catholic Church, particularly the church's teaching on the meaning of marriage and the immorality of homosexual conduct?

"For if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for the battle?" (I Corinthians 14:8) Msgr. Brennan and Immaculata High appear to have no concept of the spiritual warfare to which the Church Militant is called. They are, like many of today's clergy, too broadminded to take their own side in a fight.

Photo: Patricia Jannuzzi



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