

## Another Thought on Catholic Education....

During this past summer my wife and I had the opportunity to attend the National Diaconate Institute for Continuing Education at Xavier University. The Chancellor for the Archdiocese of Louisville, a civil lawyer and a lay person gave a presentation on ethical and moral issues that face people involved in ministry. He presented several “hypothetical cases” and asked the members of the audience to discuss (at tables of about 8 people) how they would handle each one.

A scenario that was to contain a concern for confidentiality went something like this: “You are the youth minister in a parish. Mary and Joe are high school students in your youth group, and they have been ‘going together.’ After one of your youth meetings, you notice that Mary has left her jacket behind. You pick up her jacket to return it to her and out of a pocket drops a package of condoms. What do you do?” As I recall, there were three deacon couples (including me and my wife) and one deacon who attended without his wife. At first there was silence. I had no doubts about my response, but I wanted to listen to what others had to say. One wife said that if she were the youth minister, she would confront Mary with what she had found, and tell her that she would keep the incident in confidence as long as Mary promptly discussed the matter with her mother. The others had nothing to say. I just mentally shook my head. I couldn’t believe my ears. Eventually I said basically the following, “I am not a youth minister, but I am a teacher in a Catholic high school. If I were in that situation, I would take the incident directly to the principal, and I am sure he would take it directly to the parents.”

Of course, the presenter said that the youth minister had to take the matter directly to the parents. He even mentioned that keeping it in confidence and letting the student (a minor) deal with it would be irresponsible. If there is anything that I (and many others) should have learned from the *Virtus* program, it is that if you have some concerns about something that might be putting a youth in harm’s way, you can’t just sit on the information, because you want to be nice (the answer above) or you don’t want to get involved. You must take action at the proper level.

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