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By Dawn Morais Webster

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Full- or part-time teachers in Catholic schools supervised by the Honolulu Diocese will soon have to sign contracts that promise termination if they violate Church teaching or engage in activities the Church deems immoral.

This includes homosexuality, abortion, unmarried co-habitation, in vitro fertilization and more.

Speaking at the consecration of new archbishops last year, Pope Francis offered this advice: "Love, with the love of a father and of a brother, all those whom God entrusts to you."

In *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of The Gospel), the Pope repeatedly stresses the inclusiveness of Jesus.

How, then, would he view these new contracts?

Michael Rockers, the superintendent of Hawaii Roman Catholic schools, describes the new contracts as being "authentic about what our moral teaching is," and an effort to be "pastoral" and "centered on what's best for the students."

Rockers is reported to have said, "If a teacher's homosexuality were made public, it would negatively affect the children."

Presumably, parents should "fire" any children who ever come out to them lest their homosexuality "negatively affect" their siblings? Perhaps they should turn them out on the street? What would Jesus, whom Pope Francis describes as a teacher who "can break through the dull categories with which we would enclose him," say to this expression of church?

Pope Francis is doing much to bring back the "fragrance of the Gospel" and the spirit of Vatican II. Against that welcome wind comes the distinctly unpleasant whiff of the new rules for Catholic teachers here. The election of Pope Francis and his vision have allowed weary lay Catholics to feel like there is a little more oxygen in the room. The new contract for Catholic teachers sucks all that oxygen out.

For many, staying Catholic has never been about just following rules. It's always been more about the poetry of faith. About the mystery of a man whose teachings, when not perverted, invite us to rise above our self-interest. To actually see our neighbor, and perhaps seeing, find it in ourselves to seek the common good. The rewards of the faith journey are a heightened sense of what it means to be stewards of each other and of our fragile planet.



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Faith surely demands more of us than the obsessive policing of what people do with their sexual and reproductive organs. Why is there not the same zeal about holding Catholics in high places accountable for their denial of climate change? Or for their callousness toward the poor? For denying thousands access to health services the Affordable Care Act has made available? Doesn't the Church feel the same urgency to be "morally authentic" toward Catholic governors and congressmen and senators about their betrayals of Church teaching?

Pope Francis has said pointedly that "the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems."

He cautions against the pushing of "certain doctrinal or moral points based on specific ideological options."

He warns that the Gospel invites us to "see God in others and to seek the good of others. ... If this invitation does not radiate forcefully and attractively, the edifice of the Church's moral teaching risks becoming a house of cards."

The proposed new contract for Catholic teachers in Hono-lulu sounds like just such a house of cards. The Gospel stories of Jesus choosing the path of love over the law tell me that the Teacher whom Catholics follow would have no part of this kind of policing of those who teach our children.

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