



THE

The Newspaper of Local 1776
The Association of Catholic Teachers

SPIRIT

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From the President's Desk

Christmas Blessings

I can't believe that I am writing my final "*From the President's Desk*" article to you. And what better time to do it than during this very special time of the year.

Christmas is just a few days away and, for one last time, I am taking a few moments to reflect on the many blessings God has given the members of the Association of Catholic Teachers during this past year.

There is the blessing of a negotiated Labor-Management Agreement. Sometimes, it is difficult to explain to teachers who have come into the System under the protection and benefits of a negotiated contract just what it was like to work during a time when there was no grievance procedure, no job security, no limit on class size, no ceiling on the number of preparations, and, most of all, no union representation. Teachers were on their own, employees-at-will, with the possibility of being terminated for any reason or no reason at all. Ask any teacher who has sought the help of the Association when a situation arises, and they will tell you that they are very happy that the Association of Catholic Teachers has been there for almost 58 years, providing support and advice to them during a difficult time.

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From the President's Desk

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The members of the ACT Executive Board are another blessing. All of them give freely of their time and energy, always helping with the important, sometimes unpopular, decisions that need to be made to ensure that our Labor-Management Agreement is followed, and our Union is respected.

I am so appreciative of every member who nominated themselves to be a part of the 2025-2026 Executive Board. I commend their willingness to become more involved in the Association's leadership, especially the candidates for the contested positions of President--Bill Finnegan and James Vernon--and Executive Secretary--Matthew McShane and Marygrace Robinson. While the election results may not have been what Bill and Marygrace hoped, I applaud their desire to take on these important leadership roles. As other opportunities become available, my wish is that they will again offer their skills and experience to the Association.

To those ACT members whom you have chosen as the 2025-2026 Executive Board, I am very confident that they will continue the legacy of providing you with the best leadership possible.

The hard-working Senior Delegates and Alternate Delegates in the 15 Archdiocesan high schools continue to be a blessing. The Senior Delegates and Alternate Delegates are the Association's lifeline and communication link in each of the high schools. These men and women make sure that the contract is enforced at the local level. Before you go home to celebrate Christmas with your families, please thank your Senior Delegate and Alternate Delegate for all they do for you.

There will never be enough words to describe what a blessing ACT Administrative Assistant and Office Manager Ginny is. Nothing that any of us ask of Ginny is ever too much. Ginny keeps each of our worlds running so much smoother.

You, the members of the Association of Catholic Teachers are the greatest blessing. You constantly make me proud. In the classroom and beyond, you always do much more than what is asked of you. You put your lives on the line every day to do what you love to do—teach the students who attend the 15 Archdiocesan high schools.

The New Year will be upon us very soon. For now, it is time for you to just relax and rejuvenate. You have earned it. Take a few moments to count the blessings in your life. I think you will be amazed at how many there are.

Christmas Blessings to you and your family. Best wishes for a very Happy and Healthy New Year.

Irene

ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT SET TO RETIRE

After 25 years in the classroom as a Mathematics teacher and Department Head at Archbishop Ryan High School, and after another 23 years on the staff of the Association of Catholic Teachers, Local 1776, **Irene Tori** will be retiring from the Secondary School System as well as from the Association of Catholic Teachers.

Irene has been a member of the Association of Catholic Teachers for 48 years, joining in 1977 when she began her teaching career at Archbishop Ryan High School for Boys. She was an active ACT member from the start, serving on every Negotiating Team since 1982 and representing ACT on numerous committees during her tenure.

Irene has held many positions on the ACT Executive Board. She was first elected to the ACT Executive Board in 1982 as a Member-At-Large. She held that position for two years before being elected Executive Secretary in 1984. She held that position until 2007. Next she was elected to Vice President, serving in that position through 2020. In October 2020, Irene was elected President and she would take over the office of President of the Association of Catholic Teachers in January, 2021. Irene's duties as President of the Association will come to a completion on December 31, 2024. Her position as ACT Staff will end on January 31, 2025.

Irene once said what she has enjoyed most about being on staff is “having direct contact on a daily basis with you, the members.”

If you have ever had the occasion to contact Irene with a personal or contract question, or a school-related matter, you know first-hand the thorough, professional and caring manner in which Irene has answered your question and/or handled your concern. Thank you, Irene.



The ACT Executive Board, on behalf of the Members of the Association of Catholic Teachers, wishes outgoing President, Irene Tori, a Happy, Healthy and Well-Earned Retirement.

We know the next chapter of your life will be just as adventurous and fulfilling as the past chapters have been, so enjoy!

Thank you, Irene, for your dedication, and life-long service to Catholic Education and to the Students and Teachers in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

May God Bless You Always!



Thank you

With my time as ACT President coming to an end, it is impossible for me to sum up all that I am feeling right now. My decision to retire was not an easy one to make. Nor was it made quickly. However, I know that it is the right decision for me and my family.

I want to take a moment to thank you for welcoming me into your lives and giving me the opportunity to advocate for you. I have loved working for you and with you. I am very proud of how you always stand up for yourselves, no matter what the challenge. This is especially true during some very difficult contract negotiations. You have always stood firm in your support of each other and the Association of Catholic Teachers.

As of January 1, 2025, a new ACT President will be leading our Union. I extend my congratulations to James Vernon (President), Matthew McShane (Executive Secretary), Christine Hanley Maldonado (Treasurer), and Michael Fischer (Member-At-Large). Along with the re-elected Executive Board members, Kathleen Toenniessen-Innes (Vice President), John Corrigan (Legislative Representative), Ellen O'Hara and Rosanne Betham (Members-At-Large), as well as Area Vice Presidents Bridget Mierzejewski (Central), Christine Hanley Maldonado (Northeast), Eric Wahl (Northwest), and,) yet-to-be-appointed Southwest Area Vice President, I know that the ACT Executive Board will continue to work on your behalf.

It has been an honor for me to work for all of you during the past 23 years, the last 4 years as your President. I appreciate your faith in me and your loyalty to your colleagues and the Association of Catholic Teachers. While I may no longer be in the thick of things after January 31, 2025, I will, definitely, be watching and cheering you on whenever and wherever and however I can. You will always have my undying support, and I will keep all of you in my heart and in my prayers.

Thank you for everything!

Irene



ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC TEACHERS EXECUTIVE BOARD ELECTION RESULTS 2024

PRESIDENT:	William J. Finnegan, Jr.	183	votes
	* James R. Vernon	208	votes
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY:	* Matthew McShane	210	votes
	Marygrace Robinson	181	votes

(*Indicates elected members of the Executive Board.)

Total Number of Buildings Submitting Ballots	15
Total Ballots Received	411
Invalid Ballots	19
Total Valid Ballots	392

*****Reasons for Invalid Ballots:**

No signature on the Signature Sheet: 9
Missing Inner Envelope: 6
No Signature on Envelope: 1
Blank Ballot: 1
Double votes per candidate: 2

The Election Results were tabulated and certified on Monday, December 2, 2024, by the Nominations and Elections Committee—Anne Boland (LF), James Flannery (RC-Chair), Bridget Mierzejewski (WC), Nicholas Stark (RC), Julie Teston (FJ), and Maureen Toman-Logan (RC).

The following members ran unopposed and were therefore re-elected and/or elected to the ACT Executive Board:

Kathleen Toenniessen-Innes -- Vice President
Christine Hanley Maldonado -- Treasurer
John Corrigan -- Legislative Representative
Rosanne Betham -- Member-At-Large
Michael Fischer -- Member-At-Large
Ellen O'Hara -- Member-At-Large

Tom Imburgia, current ACT Executive-Secretary, cast the one vote needed to confirm their appointment.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU

Thank you to the members of the Nominations and Elections Committee: *Anne Boland (LF), James Flannery-Chair (RC), Bridget Mierzejewski (WC), Nicholas Stark (RC), Julie Teson (FJ), and Maureen Toman-Logan (RC).*

They were certainly kept busy during the campaign and spent several hours on December 2nd checking signatures, opening envelopes, counting ballots and certifying the election. Thank you to ACT counsel, Martin Milz, who was on call during the campaign and was present for the count. A big thank-you goes to Ginny Crowther, our Office Manager. She worked very hard to ensure that everything dealing with the election was handled properly.

FSA REMINDER

If you were a participant in the 2024 FSA Program, please remember that all monies in your account should be exhausted by December 31, 2024. Any funds that remain in your account after December 31, 2024 will be lost. However, this does not mean that all your eligible expenses must be submitted by December 31, 2024. You have 90 days after the close of the calendar year in which to submit eligible expenses for 2024.

INSURANCE INFORMATION

Dental Plan: As of January 1, 2025, you and each of your family members have \$1,000 in dental benefits to use for covered services in calendar year 2025. A list of your dental benefits is listed on the ACT Website at www.act1776.com.

Medical Plan: Independence Blue Cross mailed out new identification cards to all its members. Please make sure when you visit your doctor or lab, you take a copy of your new card with you since your identification number has changed.

Reminder: Deductibles for Personal Choice PPO and Keystone HMO will reset on January 1, 2025. Therefore as of January, you will need to meet your annual \$100 individual deductible and/or \$200 family deductible for calendar year 2025. You may begin receiving bills for services, informing you that there is a deductible to be met prior to the insurance company making any payment.

These services include the following: Outpatient laboratory and pathology, home health care and/or hospice, skilled nursing, chemotherapy, radiation, dialysis, outpatient Private Duty Nursing, and physician/surgeon charges that require a deductible. (**Please note** that the deductible for the Personal Choice High Deductible Plan was reset on November 1, 2024.)

Voluntary Vision Plan: Open enrollment for the Voluntary Vision Plan has come to an end.

If you signed up for vision benefits, your plan will go into effect on January 1, 2025. All members on the plan will receive a new identification card. For members who are currently on the plan and who will be remaining on the plan, please make sure you give your provider your new identification number. If you are currently on the plan and did not use the plan this calendar year, try and do so before your benefits expire on December 31st.

Rest in Peace

*Barbara Cowley
Retired, Archbishop Ryan High School*

May perpetual light shine upon her.



*May her soul and all the souls of the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.*

If anyone would like to submit an *In Memoriam* article, you are most welcome to do so. You can submit your article to act@act1776.com

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE



As we count on our military to keep our country safe, let us always be thankful to our veterans for their service and for their many sacrifices!

*The Association of Catholic Teachers
wishes you and your family*



*A Blessed Christmas
and a
Happy and Safe New Year.*

Merry Christmas