News



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For two marketing classes taught at North Catholic High School in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, a career and college counselor at the school invited three owners of a local store to talk about how they run their small business. As part of their visit in December, the store owners offered each student a small crystal.

That’s because the business, Elemental Magick, sells books, jewelry, candles and other items used in various metaphysical practices. The three store owners, married couple Tabitha and Tamara Latshaw and their sister-in-law Kari Latshaw, are all Wiccan high priestesses.

"We sell crystals," said Tabitha Latshaw in a video statement posted to Facebook. "If we sold gum, we would have handed out a pack of gum."

But after some students complained to North Catholic administrators, according to reports, the counselor, who has not been identified publicly, was questioned, then, in early January, asked to resign.

In an interview with KDKA-TV, Michelle Peduto, a diocesan school administrator, explained that educators at diocesan schools are required to sign a statement saying that their instruction will align with Catholic teachings. Both the visit and the crystals were not a "good fit," she said.

"It is because, as we know, our faith is in Jesus Christ and not in objects necessarily," Peduto said in a separate interview with KDKA. "Rosary beads? Yes. But crystals, no."

North Catholic, founded in 1939 as a boys school and staffed traditionally by the Marian order, is an anchor of Catholic life in Pittsburgh. Alumni include former CIA Director Michael Hayden and the late owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers, Dan Rooney.

Formerly known as Cardinal Wuerl North Catholic High School, after the former bishop and archbishop of Washington, D.C., the school removed the cardinal’s name in 2018 at his request after he was criticized for his handling of sexual abuse cases there.

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According to the KDKA-TV report, letters were sent home after the store owners' appearance in the marketing classes. The letters asked families to "dispose of the crystals" and to cleanse their home by saying a prayer to St. Michael the archangel. The Diocese of Pittsburgh reportedly labeled the employee's actions "inappropriate" and, in a letter to the former employee, "egregious."

The Latshaws did not know of their friend's departure from North Catholic until last week when a reporter asked for their reaction. After learning the news, the store owners have used the situation to demonstrate the popularity of crystals across various religions and in society at large.

A recent survey by Springtide Research Institute shows that 44% of Gen Z use crystals and herbs for spiritual connection or entertainment.

"Crystals are everywhere and are exclusive to no religion, including Wicca," said Tabitha Latshaw in the Facebook statement, pointing out that in the jewelry industry, crystals are more commonly known as semiprecious gemstones.

The store owners labeled their weekly Sunday crystal sale #Godcreatedthis. "You don't have to be a witch to use crystals," Latshaw said in a video statement. "We have people of all walks of faith come in here."

The Latshaws say they weren't there to talk about witchcraft or religion of any kind. "We went to North Catholic High School to discuss being entrepreneurs," Tabitha Latshaw told Religion News Service.

She told KDKA-TV: "God made these. They come from the earth. That's all I can say."

The former school employee told the local reporter that she did not believe that the crystals or the owners' religion would cause a stir. In hindsight, she recognized she should have thought the visit through more carefully, but she was surprised that the situation was not used as an "opportunity for me to grow and develop as a professional and as a Catholic."