



EMBARGOED
FRIDAY, MARCH 30, 2012
11:30 A.M.

Paxton, MA: Anna Maria College officially notified Mrs. Vicki Kennedy on Thursday, March 29, 2012 in person and also in writing regarding her participation in the College's 2012 commencement ceremony. The call and letter were a follow up to concerns expressed by Bishop Robert McManus regarding the College's decision to honor Mrs. Kennedy at this event.

It was explained to Mrs. Kennedy that the College feels strongly that it followed the appropriate process leading to its initial invitation. The College also maintains its belief in the appropriateness of recognizing Mrs. Kennedy's many contributions to the societal issues they both share, especially her work with gun control and the safety of children.

Concerns were expressed about the College being in conflict with the Bishop and hosting an event that could create negative publicity and a difficult situation for both Mrs. Kennedy and AMC. As a small, Catholic college that relies heavily on the good will of its relationship with the Bishop and the larger Catholic community, its options are limited. Should the Bishop's concerns become a public debate, Mrs. Kennedy's appearance at Commencement and the recognition of her many outstanding achievements could be reduced to a focus other than the primary importance of Commencement, a celebration for Anna Maria College graduates.

In conclusion, Mrs. Kennedy was informed that after hours of discerning and struggling with elements of all sides of this issue, the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees decided with deep regret to withdraw its invitation to her to serve as Anna Maria College's 2012 Commencement speaker and honorary degree recipient.

The College apologized to Mrs. Kennedy for this situation and expressed appreciation for her understanding of its position. While the Board believes that this is the necessary decision, it will continue to advocate for increased opportunities to practice its Catholic values of hospitality, compassion, reconciliation, respect for all people and understanding.