

**Statement from the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland and Lake Catholic High School
May 25, 2022**

Last week, Lake Catholic and the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland learned of the very serious allegations of anti-Semitism at a Lake Catholic – Orange High School varsity lacrosse game, including the appearance of a swastika on the back of the leg of a Lake Catholic player. The swastika is the most notorious symbol of antisemitism and hate more broadly, and its appearance was both shocking and appalling. The Diocese of Cleveland and Lake Catholic High School condemn anti-Semitism in all forms, and we extend our most sincere apologies to the Orange High School community and to all Jewish and non-Jewish community members alike for the hurt that has resulted from this incident.

Since learning of the allegations, Lake Catholic and the Diocese have worked to gather all the facts as quickly as possible, with the goal being to appropriately punish wrongdoing and to use the opportunity to reinforce the universal truth that each person is made in the image of an all good and loving God and deserving of respect and love.

Based on the available evidence, we believe the following to be true:

- Prior to the game, a Lake Catholic player, in an attempt to play a prank on three other Lake Catholic players and without thinking through the possible consequences, drew a swastika on his hand with eye black and pressed his hand on the arms of two players and the back of the calf of a third player, thereby transferring the image of the swastika onto those other players.
- The two players with the mark on their arms became aware of the mark on their arms prior to the game commencing and rubbed the mark off.
- The player with the mark on his calf was unaware of what was on his leg when he took the field of play and remained unaware until it was brought to his attention during the course of the game. The mark was subsequently removed with the help of teammates.
- The player who stamped the mark on the other players has cooperated fully in the investigation, has expressed sorrow at his actions and the hurt caused as a result, and is willing to accept responsibility for his actions.
- We were unable to find any evidence that any Lake Catholic player uttered any anti-Semitic slur or remark despite commentary to the contrary.
- Although it was alleged in a secondhand account that a player for Orange reported hearing a Lake Catholic staff member use an anti-Semitic slur during the game, no eyewitness came forward to testify or provide a statement about this allegation and no official, coach, or athlete reported hearing it. Consequently, we were unable to determine whether this occurred.

- After the game had concluded, an adult associated with Lake Catholic who had acted as the team photographer, while not saying anything anti-Semitic, used coarse and profane language in a verbal exchange with individuals associated with Orange High School.
- It was alleged that an unidentified person uttered or shouted an anti-Semitic slur after the game had concluded. The person who reported hearing the slur was unable to identify who might have said the slur. No one else reported hearing the slur, and a video with audio of the game and its aftermath was reviewed but provided no evidence to corroborate the report. Consequently, we are unable to conclude whether this occurred.

As a result of these findings, Lake Catholic has begun implementing the following response and action plan:

- The player responsible for putting the mark on his teammates (a senior) was prohibited from participating in commencement exercises and will not receive his diploma and final transcript until he completes community service assigned by the school and participates in the team programming described below.
- The entire 2022 lacrosse team will be required to attend a program developed by the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage in the coming weeks. The program will include both instructive and restorative elements. (Graduated seniors will not receive their final transcripts unless the program is completed.)
- Existing curriculum will be augmented with additional educational programming to further promote a culture of love and respect based on the truth that each and every person has inherent dignity as a child of God who is made in His image and likeness.
- The adult photographer who used coarse and profane language will be prohibited from acting in any official capacity relating to the school going forward and will be subject to further action if found to engage in similar conduct in the future.

It should also be noted that the head coach of the Lake Catholic lacrosse team has resigned.

This incident reminds us all that sin and its consequences are a reality of the human experience and that actions have very real consequences. We pray for all those who have experienced hurt as a result of what occurred. We pray also that those at fault, in a spirit of humility, learn to grow in kindness, love, and good judgment. Finally, we pray for healing and forgiveness so that from this experience we might overcome division and grow closer as a human family.