

# CATHOLIC EDUCATOR



## **CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN PERSPECTIVE**

*~ Reverend Peter M.J. Stravinskas, Ph.D., S.T.D.*

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# *Catholic Educator* \* *Fall 2007*

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The cover was designed by freelance graphic artist **Julie Romans** and features an image of St. Vincent DePaul sculpted by Catholic artist **Timothy Schmaltz**.

## ***From the President's Desk***

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In our first issue of the *Catholic Educator*, we shared with you that in addition to our Foundation's financial objectives in recovering Catholic education, we became aware of the opportunity to facilitate a 'broad ongoing conversation in which all of us interested in the recovery of Catholic education can share ideas, raise awareness of new programs and initiatives, and expand the Apostolate.' By way of financial interests we have recently dispersed scholarships bringing our total in the excess of \$140,000. We are in receipt of many warm and meaningful thank-you letters which you can read on our website under the tab titled 'Testimonials.'

In this issue, the conversation continues. We have a short selection from *Divini Illius Magistri*, an encyclical written by Pope Pius XI in 1929 on the Christian Education of Youth. We have a thought-provoking perspective on Catholic schools by Father Peter M.J. Stravinskis, Ph.D., S.T.D., and an article by Ron Bowes, Ph.D., from the Diocese of Pittsburgh showing what could be possible with tax credits for Catholic schools. Eileen Cubanski, Executive Director of NAPC\*IS, tells the inspiring story of that program. Anthony Pienta and Kevin Schmiesing, Ph.D., tell us about the success of two traditional large and flourishing Catholic high schools. Both gentlemen are affiliated with the Catholic High School Honor Roll. Finally, Patrick S.J. Carmack, J.D. and Steve Bertucci tell us of the innovative work of the Angelicum Academy, a classical internet-based homeschool program, in which students can gain up to 48 college credit hours. This is truly an all-star cast.

In our efforts to recover Catholic education we must remember many other groups recognize that education is what shapes society. For example, Muslims and Communists are notorious for using their educational systems to brainwash youth. Catholic education shapes the individual in his/her relationship with Jesus and his/her relationship with the Church. This is a battle we must win.

We thank our contributors who are truly missionaries. We also thank all other missionaries who make contributions to the effort to recover Catholic education.

May the peace of our Lord be on all of us.

Warmly,



A. Joseph Indelicato  
President & Founder  
Catholic Education Foundation

## A short selection from *Divini Illius Magistri*

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### Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on the Christian Education of Youth, 1929

*Venerable Brethren and Beloved Children, Health and Apostolic Benediction . . .*

5. Indeed never has there been so much discussion about education as nowadays; never have exponents of new pedagogical theories been so numerous, or so many methods and means devised, proposed and debated, not merely to facilitate education, but to create a new system infallibly efficacious, and capable of preparing the present generations for that earthly happiness which they so ardently desire . . .

7. It is therefore as important to make no mistake in education, as it is to make no mistake in the pursuit of the last end, with which the whole work of education is intimately and necessarily connected. In fact, since education consists essentially in preparing man for what he must be and for what he must do here below, in order to attain the sublime end for which he was created, it is clear that there can be no true education which is not wholly directed to man's last end, and that in the present order of Providence, since God has revealed Himself to us in the Person of His Only Begotten Son, who alone is "the way, the truth and the life," there can be no ideally perfect education which is not Christian education . . .

86. In such a school, in harmony with the Church and the Christian family, the various branches of secular learning will not enter into conflict with religious instruction to the manifest detriment of education. And if, when occasion arises, it be deemed necessary to have the students read authors propounding false doctrine, for the purpose of refuting it, this will be done after due preparation and with such an antidote of sound doctrine, that it will not only do no harm, but will be an aid to the Christian formation of youth.

87. In such a school moreover, the study of the vernacular and of classical literature will do no damage to moral virtue. There the Christian teacher will imitate the bee, which takes the

choicest part of the flower and leaves the rest, as St. Basil teaches in his discourse to youths on the study of the classics. Nor will this necessary caution, suggested also by the pagan Quintilian, in any way hinder the Christian teacher from gathering and turning to profit, whatever there is of real worth in the systems and methods of our modern times, mindful of the Apostle's advice: "Prove all things: hold fast that which is good." Hence in accepting the new, he will not hastily abandon the old, which the experience of centuries has found expedient and profitable. This is particularly true in the teaching of Latin, which in our days is falling more and more into disuse, because of the unreasonable rejection of methods so successfully used by that sane humanism, whose highest development was reached in the schools of the Church. These noble traditions of the past require that the youth committed to Catholic schools be fully instructed in the letters and sciences in accordance with the exigencies of the times. They also demand that the doctrine imparted be deep and solid, especially in sound philosophy, avoiding the muddled superficiality of those "who perhaps would have found the necessary, had they not gone in search of the superfluous." In this connection Christian teachers should keep in mind what Leo XIII says in a pithy sentence: Greater stress must be laid on the employment of apt and solid methods of teaching, and, what is still more important, on bringing into full conformity with the Catholic faith, what is taught in literature, in the sciences, and above all in philosophy, on which depends in great part the right orientation of the other branches of knowledge.

88. Perfect schools are the result not so much of good methods as of good teachers, teachers who are thoroughly prepared and well-grounded in the matter they have to teach; who possess the intellectual and moral qualifications required by their important office; who cherish a pure and holy love for the youths confided to them,

because they love Jesus Christ and His Church, of which these are the children of predilection; and who have therefore sincerely at heart the true good of family and country. Indeed it fills Our soul with consolation and gratitude towards the divine Goodness to see, side by side with religious men and women engaged in teaching, such a large number of excellent lay teachers, who, for their greater spiritual advancement, are often grouped in special sodalities and associations, which are worthy of praise and encouragement as most excellent and powerful auxiliaries of "Catholic Action." All these labor unselfishly with zeal and perseverance in what St. Gregory Nazianzen calls "the art of arts and the science of sciences," the direction and formation of youth . . .

90. More than ever nowadays an extended and careful vigilance is necessary, inasmuch as the dangers of moral and religious shipwreck are greater for inexperienced youth. Especially is this true of impious and immoral books, often diabolically circulated at low prices; of the cinema, which multiplies every kind of exhibition; and now also of the radio, which facilitates every kind of communications. These most powerful means of publicity, which can be of great utility for instruction and education when directed by sound principles, are only too often used as an incentive to evil passions and greed for gain. St. Augustine deplored the passion for the shows of the circus which possessed even some Christians of his time, and he dramatically narrates the infatuation for them, fortunately only temporary, of his disciple and friend Alipius.[60] How often today must parents and educators bewail the corruption of youth brought about by the modern theater and the vile book . . .

92. This necessary vigilance does not demand that young people be removed from the society in which they must live and save their souls; but that today more than ever they should be forewarned and forearmed as Christians against the seductions and the errors of the world, which, as Holy Writ admonishes us, is all "concupiscence of the flesh, concupiscence of the eyes and pride of life." [61] Let them be what

Tertullian wrote of the first Christians, and what Christians of all times ought to be, "sharers in the possession of the world, not of its error" . . .

94. The proper and immediate end of Christian education is to cooperate with divine grace in forming the true and perfect Christian, that is, to form Christ Himself in those regenerated by Baptism, according to the emphatic expression of the Apostle: "My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you." For the true Christian must live a supernatural life in Christ: "Christ who is your life," and display it in all his actions: "That the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh."

95. For precisely this reason, Christian education takes in the whole aggregate of human life, physical and spiritual, intellectual and moral, individual, domestic and social, not with a view of reducing it in any way, but in order to elevate, regulate and perfect it, in accordance with the example and teaching of Christ.

96. Hence the true Christian, product of Christian education, is the supernatural man who thinks, judges and acts constantly and consistently in accordance with right reason illumined by the supernatural light of the example and teaching of Christ; in other words, to use the current term, the true and finished man of character. For, it is not every kind of consistency and firmness of conduct based on subjective principles that makes true character, but only constancy in following the eternal principles of justice, as is admitted even by the pagan poet when he praises as one and the same "the man who is just and firm of purpose." And on the other hand, there cannot be full justice except in giving to God what is due to God, as the true Christian does . . .

*Pius XI reigned as Pope from 1922 through 1939.*

*Most famous for establishing the Feast of Christ the King, the Encyclical above on the Christian Education of Youth is consistent with Pius XI's mission to emphasize Christ's Kingship over all areas of human life.*

*The full text of this encyclical is available online from the Papal Archives at:*  
[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_xi](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi)

# Catholic Schools in Perspective

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By: the Very Reverend Peter M.J. Stravinskias, Ph.D., S.T.D.

*The days have come. . . in which the school is more necessary than the church.*

Does that statement startle you? Who could say that? The answer is that it did indeed startle people the first time it was said – and nearly 150 years ago – by Archbishop John J. Hughes of New York. In many ways, it was his insight and foresight that launched the Catholic community in America on an endeavor unparalleled in the history of the Church. Archbishop Hughes felt that if he lost the children, there would be little hope for the future of the Church in this country.

From the last third of the 19th century until the same period of the 20th century, the Catholic school system in the United States was the marvel and envy of the Church Universal – and then the bottom fell out! What happened? How? Why?

Some would-be opinion-makers in the Church raised questions about the Church's commitment to and understanding of Catholic education as it had been traditionally understood since the Catholic school curriculum had become similar in many ways to that of the public schools. Regular school closings, an increased reliance on lay teachers, and a new stress on out-of-school religious education programs as viable alternatives were also operative factors. Another concern raised at the time was whether or not parochial schools fostered a so-called "ghetto mentality," causing Catholics to be unassimilated into the mainstream of American life. Add to all this a decline in Catholic births, similar to that of the overall American population. The end result found dramatic expression in the thousands of Catholic parents who withdrew their children from Catholic schools, or never enrolled them at all, either because there were none or because parental confidence in the schools (and the Church) had been shaken. We shall have to return to these matters later.

Forty years later, and much wiser for the experience, the Catholic community has demonstrated a renewed interest in Catholic educa-

tion as enrollments have stabilized and even increased in many dioceses. Unfortunately, this has not occurred across the board. Some of this change of heart has come about because parents realize they need positive reinforcement of their values in the classroom; the secular humanism of the government schools cannot help them in that area and, in some cases, actively opposes their value system, to the confusion of the children.

Furthermore, it is now clear that the school does not replace parents but supplements their primary work of planting the seed of faith, a process that usually needs to be complemented by professional educators, a point made by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council and by subsequent Popes. This consciousness has guided the Church's understanding of the educational enterprise from the very beginning and goes a long way to explain her intense commitment to providing a total education in a value-oriented atmosphere. There has been an amazing consistency on this, as even a brief survey of ecclesiastical documents would reveal. At present, we need only be concerned with those which have had an impact on the Church in this country.

The First Provincial Council of Baltimore in 1829 asserted that "we judge it absolutely necessary that schools be established in which the young may be taught the principles of faith and morality, while being instructed in letters." The bishops of the nation made their judgment a matter of law in 1884 at the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore: "We decide and decree that near each church, where it does not exist, a parish school is to be erected within two years of the promulgation of this Council."

Some American bishops, like John Ireland, opted for an "assimilationist" form of Catholicism. This Americanist point of view maintained that Catholic doctrine should be presented in a way that would cause as little difference to surface with Protestants as possible. Educationally, the Americanists were op-

posed to parochial schools, however, by the time the Code of Canon Law was enacted in 1918, they had to face this strong statement: "Catholic children are not to attend non-Catholic, neutral or mixed schools." Where no other alternative was available, the bishop himself had to determine what dangers to the Faith existed and then judge if a dispensation from the law would be tolerable.

The rationale behind this stringent injunction was explained clearly by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical "On the Christian Education of Youth": "The so-called 'neutral' school from which religion is excluded, is contrary to the fundamental principles of education. Such a school moreover cannot exist in practice; it is bound to become irreligious." While this kind of thinking has been characterized as a "fortress" or "siege mentality," few observers can doubt that the American public school is a potent example of a "neutral" school system becoming "irreligious" de facto and, some would add, de jure.

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council dealt with Catholic education extensively as they followed the trajectory of Church teaching to that point and contributed to its development as well. Several comments bear notice from their Declaration on Christian Education:

"The Church's involvement in the field of education is demonstrated especially by the Catholic school . . . Therefore, since it can contribute so substantially to fulfilling the mission of God's people, and can further the dialogue between the Church and the family of man, to their mutual benefit, the Catholic school retains its immense importance in the circumstances of our times too. . . ."

" . . . As for Catholic parents, the Council calls to mind their duty to entrust their children to Catholic schools . . . . " One should observe that these statements are rather absolute, not surrounded by various qualifiers.

In 1971 the American bishops issued a pastoral letter on Catholic education, "To Teach as Jesus Did." It became the standard by which to judge all Catholic schools, outlining as it did the goals and objectives for all Catholic institutions of learning. Included is the following statement: "[They] are

the most effective means available to the Church for the education of children and young people." Many would point to the great irony that at the very moment of the letter's promulgation, pastors were closing schools at an unprecedented rate, usually with the blessing of the local bishop.

Pope Paul VI's bicentennial message to the Church in the United States contained praise for the American Catholic school system and an encouragement to continue the tradition: "The strength of the Church in America (is) in the Catholic schools." Nor was it sheer coincidence that the two Americans Paul VI canonized in observance of our bicentennial, Bishop John Neumann of Philadelphia and Mother Seton of New York, were prime movers in the parochial school effort.

The most thorough analysis of Catholic education in modern times was offered by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education in 1977. "The Catholic School" probed every aspect of the educational process and also recognized the fact that some people had suggested the phasing out of Catholic schools. Its conclusion was that "to give in to them would be suicidal."

Pope John Paul II's esteem for the American Catholic school system was demonstrated on several occasions. Just months after his installation, he sent a videotaped message to Catholic educators gathered in Philadelphia for the annual convention of the National Catholic Educational Association, in which he said that he hoped to give "a new impulse to Catholic education throughout the vast area of the United States of America." He went on to say: "Yes, the Catholic school must remain a privileged means of Catholic education in America . . . worthy of the greatest sacrifices." Later that year during his first pastoral visit to the States, with 20,000 Catholic school students at Madison Square Garden, he seized the opportunity "to tell (them) why the Church considers it so important and expends so much energy in order to provide . . . millions of young people with a Catholic education." It is for no other purpose, he said, than to "communicate Christ" to them. He likewise referred to the Catholic school as "the heart of the Church."

At times, more "traditional" critics of our schools will agree that Catholic schools were certainly su-

perb "in the old days," but are not so any more. While some horror stories about bad catechesis and poor attitudinal formation are regrettably accurate, it is crucial to underscore three other points: (1) The local government school will not be any more "Catholic," for sure. (2) In spite of deficiencies which surfaced in the seventies, Catholic elementary and secondary schools are on the rebound, in terms of reclaiming a truly Catholic identity. (3) Socialization and identification with the "institutional" Church are key for an "incarnational" religion like Catholicism, in which structures are critically important. The last aspect is highlighted in surveys done by various sociologists which show that graduates of post-conciliar Catholic schools continue to be markedly different from their public school counterparts, especially in regard to Sunday Mass attendance, thoughts on abortion, willingness to consider a priestly or religious vocation, and generosity to the local parish (both in service and donations).

At yet another level, the success story of Catholic schools in this country occurs with phenomenal regularity in the academic realm. Professor John Coleman of the University of Chicago documents an impressive performance record for Catholic high school students, which indicates that they outstrip not only public school students but also – and amazingly so – students from private schools! The reason for the success? According to Coleman, this happens because of religious and moral values and because of the coordination between home and school. These two aspects take on the greatest significance when we reflect on the incredible achievements of youngsters in inner-city Catholic schools.

If all this is true, then why were we closing schools at the rate of one a day during the seventies, and why have so few bishops opened new schools in areas to which the Catholic population has shifted? Those questions will occupy us next.

Our Lord tells us that when one really valuable pearl is found, everything else should be sold to purchase it. Therefore, next to the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, it is hard to imagine any activity of the Church more important than that of Catholic education. Indeed, in many ways, it is

more important than worship itself because without sound catechesis, the rites of the Church are generally incomprehensible.

Well, if that is true, how did we move so far off the dime in reference to Catholic schools in the past four decades? Several factors coalesced. The process began while I was a student, continued when I was a young seminarian-teacher, and came into full bloom when I served as a school administrator. The drama is still being played out. Like any human dilemma, it is hard to perceive causes up-close. At a distance of thirty years, one is better able to see and, therefore, to deal with it.

1. Loss of Catholic Identity. If Pope John Paul II was correct in asserting that the Catholic school is "the heart of the Church," it should have astounded no one that the post-conciliar confusion in the United States would affect our schools. Catechetical experimentation, liturgical silliness, educational trendiness – all characterized many Catholic educational institutions in the late 60's and into the 70's. Placing the phenomenon in its ecclesial context makes it more understandable and even logical. Seen against the broad background of American education in general at the time, one wonders how anyone could have reasonably expected Catholic schools to be spared. Regardless of the rationale, the bottom-line still came down to the same unacceptable reality: Children and adolescents were either not receiving the Catholic Faith in all its fullness or were losing it. And all too often those most in positions to do something to help seemed powerless to turn things around or were actually committed to the downward spiral. Many good Catholic parents began to ask themselves if it made sense to spend hard-earned money to contribute to the loss of their children's faith.

2. Decline in the Involvement of Clergy and Religious. It is no secret that the 60's witnessed a major bail-out of Religious from Catholic schools, for two reasons: 1) They were leaving religious life, period; 2) Many congregations had decided that teaching was no longer "a meaningful ministry." Along with that, many priests, especially pastors, sensed they were losing control of the schools either to rebellious Religious or to lay people ignorant of the Catholic philosophy of

education. Rather than fulfill their proper moral and canonical obligations as the principal guarantors of the Catholicity of the schools, many became fearful or disheartened and abandoned the struggle, allowing the hostile take-over to occur.

3. Over-reliance on "Cheap Labor." When the full impact of the clerical and religious exodus from the schools hit, it became apparent that Catholic education in this country had survived and even thrived because of teachers and administrators who willingly and lovingly accepted subsistence salaries. Certainly one has a right to expect committed Catholic educators – clerical, religious or lay – to make financial sacrifices for the welfare of the system and the Church it sought to foster. However, not infrequently it happened that clergy and Religious were desired not in themselves but because they were cost-effective. When that was the over-riding motivation, it was justly punished by the salary increases of the past several years.

4. Awe and Intimidation before the Government Education Establishment. For years Catholic educators labored under the burden of a massive inferiority complex: Our facilities were often old and dilapidated; our faculties frequently were uncertified; our classes were large; our instructional programs were scarcely touched by John Dewey's reforms. Particularly in the suburbs, pastors and Catholic school teachers joined the chorus of parents expressing discontent and embarrassment over the very obvious lacks of our schools when contrasted with the public option. The battle-cry became attaining parity with the government school system – not totally bad – but surely pre-mature, superficial and unwarranted in many instances. This trend toward "professionalization" of Catholic schools was often accomplished by a secularizing trend as well, which did more to unravel the fabric of Catholic education than our former "unprofessional" state. Three decades later and much wiser, we have now learned – with astounding regularity and consistency from those in other educational settings – that we had and still have something worth all the effort. In fact, not a few public school districts look to the Catholic schools to discover how "so much can be done with so little."

5. Confused Parental Priorities. Not all parents opted out of Catholic schools simply because some "weren't Catholic anymore." Just as many had lost sight of the things that truly matter in the formation of a child. School swimming pools, classes of ten students, a host of elective offerings, an additional television at home, winter vacations – these things became more critical than imparting the Christian message in a holistic environment of faith. Sadly, this lack of balance was rarely challenged from the pulpit and has now become ingrained in nearly an entire generation of Catholic parents.

6. Decline in Church Attendance and Contributions. Seldom does anyone reflect on the fact that the fewer people who go to Sunday Mass, the less money the parish receives, and the less there is to work with in the budget. Furthermore, the fewer devout parents, the less the likelihood of their sending their children to Catholic schools. Not surprisingly, a vicious cycle is created, so that another whole generation is infected with non-practice.

7. Competing Parochial Programs View Schools as a "Drain." When the unifying leadership of the pastor is lacking to state forcefully the institutional commitment to Catholic education, all kinds of contenders for center stage appear on the horizon. The problem began back in the late 50's when the school budget was separated from the rest of the parish budget, suggesting that the school was or should be an autonomous entity. With good reason, then, CCD, RCIA, CYO and the rest of the ecclesiastical alphabet soup came to regard themselves as central to parochial life while the school was deemed an extraneous burden. Until the conviction returns that nothing can replace the full Catholic education of our children will the school be seen as integral to the well-being, indeed the essence, of a Catholic parish in the nited States. If that is true, then we can't argue that 300 children are "eating up" 60% of the budget, for there can be no better investment.

As should be obvious by now, a complex series of causes brought about the decline in Catholic education. Identifying the difficulties is not a morbid exercise in futility if it can launch the Catholic community on an

examination of conscience which can move us to an understanding of our mistakes and set us on the road to a renewed appreciation of the value of Catholic schools for the Church in America.

Whether or not that happens, however, never allow someone to declare that finances have been killing our schools; the crisis in confidence, the crisis in faith, has been doing them in.

Allow me to conclude with some anecdotal data.

For several years now, I have taken up a pet project: Reading the biographical “blurbs” on the newly-ordained for the various dioceses, whose newspapers I receive. Time after time, one discovers “the Catholic school link,” regardless of the age of the ordinand. Indeed, in my admittedly unofficial and unscientific survey [but this “anecdotal” information has also been confirmed in studies by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate], I have found that approximately 90% of the men have had at least a Catholic elementary school education, with half of them likewise graduating from Catholic secondary schools. That kind of a statistic is even more impressive when one considers that, unfortunately, fewer than 25% of American Catholic boys have the benefit of a full twelve-year experience of the Church’s schools. And while vocation “recruitment” is not the sole indicator of the value of a Catholic education, it is a powerful one since it also suggests that the same institutions are fertile training for all types of lay apostolates as well. The vocational angle alone, however, would make a deep impression on anyone looking toward the future and even for crass financial “return on investment.”

My second story. Some time ago, our community of priests and seminarians entertained two couples [married 47 and 21 years, respectively] who were going to assist us in forming a pre-Cana team. The celibates ranged in age from 48 to 19. We had a thoroughly delightful evening, with person after person sharing marvelous stories of growing up Catholic. Although we spanned at least three generations and hailed from various parts of the country, we “spoke the same language” – the language of Catholicism, which bridged every other sociological gap, whether of age or sex or ethnicity or place of birth. That evening, after the company

had left, I tried to determine what, aside from our obvious membership in the Church, we had in common, causing us to have such an uncommonly unified vision of reality. And then it dawned on me: All nine of us had been educated, from kindergarten through graduate studies, in the Church’s schools. While many of us today are rightly concerned about the decline in our worship l i f e [ w h a t sociologists refer to as “cult” in a positive sense], I recalled that both sociologists and theologians agree that a viable “cult” demands a “culture” – and Catholic education provides just that, giving us a lens to look at the world and ourselves in a unique manner. That, in essence, is what Catholic schools can do as no other educational approach can, precisely because they originate, as John Paul II said, “ex corde Ecclesiae” [from the heart of the Church], and are intended to lead their students back to the Heart of God.

*Father Peter Stravinskas is a priest of the Society of the Venerable John Henry Cardinal Newman. He is the editor-in-chief of **Newman House Press** and of **Catholic Response**, a magazine imbued with a joyful and dynamic orthodoxy and written according to high-quality journalistic standards. He is also the author of several books, many of which are available on-line through the Society's website at <http://jbcnewman.org>.*

## Tax Credits: Salvation for Catholic Schools

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By: Ronald Bowes, Ph.D.

In 2005, MSNBC reporter Steve Johnson wrote an article entitled, "Can Catholic Elementary Schools Survive?" He featured statistics showing a wave of inner-city Catholic school closings and the major reasons for this phenomenon. Changing demographics was part of the problem, but rising costs was number one.

The challenge for bishops, Catholic school administrators and supporters is to find a way to garner sufficient financial resources to, not only keep the schools open, but to actually turn the tide and enable them to grow. The only way to do this on a large scale was to advance the cause of parental choice in education and obtain assistance from the state. In Pennsylvania beginning in 1991, the Road To Educational Achievement Through Choice (REACH) Alliance was founded to inform the public, lobby legislators and help pass school choice legislation, which would give tuition assistance vouchers to parents.

Voucher proposals were unsuccessful in 1991, 1995, 1996 and 1999 despite support from the Republican Governor and the pro-voucher Republican Party that controlled both houses of the General Assembly from 1995 to 2006. As in other states, it was the overwhelming power of the teachers' union, the education bureaucracy and other labor support which halted the choice initiatives.

Before Governor Tom Ridge resigned in 2001 to take the post as Secretary of Homeland Security and with bi-partisan support, he signed the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) Program which gave businesses in Pennsylvania the ability to divert particular taxes to K-12 scholarship organizations, including religious schools. Tax credits were now able to do what vouchers were supposed to do, i.e., enable parents to choose from a variety of educational

providers and receive some public assistance to make this choice.

Tax credits, unlike vouchers, do not come from the state education budget but from provisions made from the state tax code. Tax credit donations are administered by a wide variety of private charitable organizations operating under government oversight, while vouchers are directly administered by the state. Tax credit funds are never in government hands.

Pennsylvania's tax credit program has expanded every year. In 2001 the state set aside \$26 million for K-12 scholarships, and in 2006 the number climbed to \$36 million. Scholarship organizations increased from 74 to 192. The number of grants rose from 18,656 to 30,245. The entire amount set aside in the state budget for this program used to take months before it was exhausted, but so many companies apply now that the fund is gone the first day. Since its inception, \$26 million has been donated to the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) Program from over 2,000 companies.

It should be mentioned that there is a provision in the law which allows one-third of the total EITC money (presently \$18 million) to be used for educational improvement organizations to fund innovative programs in public schools. This portion of the bill has garnered additional support for tax credits from a variety of agencies and organizations traditionally opposed to any form of school choice.

One example of the transforming nature of tax credits on Catholic education is demonstrated in the Diocese of Pittsburgh's Catholic schools. This system of schools serves 28,000 students in 115 separate schools, twelve of which are secondary. Since the EITC Program began, \$2.1 million has been donated each year for a total of \$14 million over six

years. This includes interest earned. During this time, 32,000 grants from a low of \$100 to a high of \$3,500 and an average of \$500 have been awarded. In 2003 Pennsylvania added a pre-kindergarten tax credit fund which has \$5 million in the budget. The Diocese of Pittsburgh, with over 80 pre-kindergarten schools, was able to receive an average of \$500,000 a year. In 2006 every eligible pre-kindergarten parent received full tuition for their child. The pre-kindergarten program is a feeder for the Catholic elementary school, so this is a really positive factor in maintaining Catholic elementary schools.

High school enrollment in the Pittsburgh Catholic schools in 2002-2003 registered a 3.7% drop. As tax credits became available for tuition assistance, enrollments in 2006-2007 were up 3.4%. This increase is even more dramatic if you factor in the rapid decline in the general population for this geographic area of Western Pennsylvania.

Tuition tax credits literally save the taxpayers millions of dollars by preserving cost-effective, quality schools. It is estimated that 10-15 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Pittsburgh alone were kept from closing due to the influx of tax credit tuition assistance. If these students were forced to attend public schools, it would be devastating to many public school district budgets.

It is clear from Pennsylvania that corporate tax credits are truly the salvation for many Catholic schools. Demographics will still cause many Catholic schools to close or merge, but with the significant financial aid provided by tax credits, the future looks bright. The trick now is to form coalitions in every state and begin to lobby for a tax credit law similar to Pennsylvania's. There is also the potential for a federal tax credit law which would further enhance the chances of preserving and promoting Catholic education. Corporate tax credits appear to provide the answer to the age-old argument regarding this ability of parents to fully choose the school they believe is best for their child.

*Dr. Ronald T. Boves is the Assistant Superintendent for Public Policy and Development for the Diocese of Pittsburgh. For over a decade he fought for school choice in Pennsylvania and was a charter member of the Road To Educational Achievement Through Choice (REACH) Alliance. In 2004 he was honored by the National Catholic Education Association at their convention in Boston for his work in the parental choice area.*

*Dr. Boves has written hundreds of articles on educational reform and other topics and recently made a presentation at Oxford University in England.*

*He hosts a weekly radio program called Education Plus and is a former President of Duquesne University's Alumni Association. In 1983 he was inducted into the Century Club of Distinguished Graduates of Duquesne University.*

*Dr. Boves also serves as Athletic Director for the Diocese and has produced a video for Catholic school coaches' accreditation and another video addressing the responsibility of Catholic school parents to foster good sportsmanship in their children.*

# ***NAPC\*IS: The Hope and Promise of Catholic Education***

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By: Eileen Cubanski, Ph.D.

## **The Seed is Planted**

In the summer of 1995, four schools came together for their annual retreat at Fr. Joseph Fessio's large, rustic retreat house tucked away in the hills high above Guerneville, CA, beautifully named for its serene surroundings, *Agua Dulce del Sagrado Coraçon de Jesus* (Sweet Water of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) and formed the National Association of Private Catholic\* and Independent Schools (NAPC\*IS)

Three of these schools had been mentored in their starting and early operations by Francis Crotty, co-founder, with his wife Margaret, Jerry and Dianne Muth and Vince and Lucille Cortese, of Kolbe Academy in Napa, California. Since opening its doors in 1980, Kolbe Academy had enjoyed a great record of success and a growing reputation as a leader in the preservation and promotion of faithful Catholic education. Besides its uncompromising Catholic identity and standards of academic excellence, it was Kolbe Academy's model of organization that was gaining attention, as more and more parents were looking for an alternative to public and diocesan schools for the education of their children.

It was bad enough that public schools were in a downward spiral to academic oblivion, but time was proving that the vacuum left by empty learning was quickly filled by pop psychology and social experiments that would have students as fodder for every fad, trend, and life experience, including the most insidious project of all: using the children to undermine the family structure.

Parents were having just as difficult a time navigating through diocesan schools, if not more so. Like its public school counterpart, Catholic schools were in the business of sex education. In the early '80s, it was under the guise of "family relationships" to address the AIDS crisis. This was the final straw for many

parents who were already wondering where all the "good Sisters" had gone, and what had happened to the catechism, praying the rosary, frequent confession. Parent complaints about sex education in Catholic schools, or the selection of programs and texts being used, made them the problem. Treatment at the hands of school personnel and diocesan officials left parents scandalized and dismayed. There was even no recourse for parents to their pastor, who had long ago lost control of his parish school to the centralized bureaucracy that had taken hold in every diocese in the name of the Catholic School Department. What was established to be an advisory body to the pastor, became the policy-setting authority for Catholic schools. Once parish schools became diocesan schools, bureaucrats, not parents, became the primary educators of children.

The '80's saw a surge of Catholic parents opting to home school. This phenomenon continues today, with Catholic families continuing to be the fastest growing population within the home-schooling movement. Yet, another alternative was needed by those families for whom home-schooling was an impossible option. Hence, the alternative of private independent schools took center stage in the realm of possibility.

## **A School Becomes A Movement**

By 1980, when Kolbe Academy opened its doors, there already existed several successful private independent schools operating in the Catholic tradition. They dated back to 1969 and the founding of Holy Innocents School in New Jersey; 1973, Holy Angels Academy in Louisville, Kentucky and Our Lady of Victory School in Post Falls, Idaho; 1974, Colorado Catholic Academy in Wheat Ridge, Colorado; 1978, Our Lady of the Rosary Academy in Mountain View, Colorado, to name a few.

It was Kolbe Academy, however, that people from across the country turned to, and, in

particular, the inspiration and counsel of Francis Crotty, who gave unselfishly of his time and expertise, to get them past the "I must be crazy" phase to the reality of starting a school. Dianne Muth was also there to inspire and put the daunting task into proper perspective. "It's all about salvation of souls and academic excellence," she would say. "If you remember that, everything else will fall into place."

Thus, the model of private independent schools, teaching the Catholic Faith, flourished. Organized as a non-profit, 501(c)(3) corporation, the schools were lay-founded and administered. The corporate trustees maintained control over the essential areas of a school: selection of staff; selection of curriculum; admission policies; discipline policies; and financial management. This control insured that the Catholic identity of the school would not be compromised and standards of academic excellence would be achieved.

But how could a school that professed to be in the Catholic tradition exist independently of a diocese and the authority of a bishop? Exactly the same way as a family exists as a home-school. The permission of a bishop or diocesan official is not required. A bishop's recognition or approval is required, if a school is to call itself Catholic, but not to start and to operate as a private school teaching the Catholic Faith.

#### **The Seed Bears Fruit: NAPC\*IS is Formed**

By the summer of 1995, the number of private independent schools teaching the Catholic Faith had increased dramatically. No one knew the exact figure; the estimate was over a hundred. Some, like Kolbe Academy and Holy Angels Academy, had recognition from their bishop to call themselves Catholic.

Francis Crotty, always the visionary, saw the need for an association of these schools that would preserve and promote their independence and support faithful Catholic education. This vision was shared and realized by the founders of the four charter member schools of NAPC\*IS: Kolbe Academy of Napa, CA; Manresa Academy of Reno, NV; St. Thomas Aquinas School, Tahoe City, CA; and

St. Maria Goretti Academy, Loomis, CA.

The vision of NAPC\*IS was declared in the "Sweetwater Document," the official statement of the founders' recording of the formation of the association, whose mission was "to provide for the spiritual and academic welfare of our nation's Catholic schoolchildren, directed to the greater glory of God and the growth of His Church on earth. Fulfillment of this purpose will come from strict adherence to the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church and from the implementation of reasonable and demonstrated practices of education." The "Sweetwater Document" was a rejection of the 1967 "Land O'Lakes Statement", issued by the International Federation of Catholic Universities under the Presidency of Theodore Hesburgh of Notre Dame which, in effect, divorced Catholic education from the Catholic Church in its assertion "to perform its teaching research functions effectively, the Catholic university must have a true autonomy and academic freedom in the face of authority of whatever kind, lay or clerical, external to the academic community itself." The "Sweetwater Document" proudly asserted, "academic freedom and the application of high professional standards in the preparation and teaching of the Catholic Faith comes not from autonomy and rejection of authority, but rather, only by embracing Truth as preserved by the Holy See and protected under its authority."

The asterisk in the NAPC\*IS name is explained, thus:

\* The word Catholic appears in the name of the National Association of Private Catholic and Independent Schools only to reflect the fact that some member schools have received the consent of the competent ecclesiastical authority in their diocese to bear the title Catholic school in accordance with c. 803.3. NAPC\*IS claims no authority to determine if a member school can bear this title, nor does membership in NAPC\*IS permit a school to call itself Catholic.

For twelve years, NAPC\*IS has:

1. Provided an accreditation and teacher

certification organization for private Catholic and independent schools;

2. Promoted and assisted in the establishment of new private Catholic and independent schools;
3. Assisted administrators and teachers of private Catholic and independent schools in applying Roman Catholic teachings and sound academic principles to education;
4. Guaranteed the right of parents to choose an education for their children in accordance with their religious faith.

NAPC\*IS now has a membership of 64 schools from 30 states across the country. The estimate of private Catholic and independent schools nationwide and in Canada now stands at 180. Why aren't they all NAPC\*IS member schools? "Independent" is the operative word, but we're working on breaking through that barrier to make the point that it is not just what NAPC\*IS has to offer to schools as a reason to join, but what each school has to offer to each other, and to those who are looking for assistance to start a school, or for parents to aid in their search for an alternative in the education of their children.

### **The Future of NAPC\*IS**

In October of 2006, the third annual selection of the top 50 Catholic High Schools in America was announced. The Catholic High School Honor Roll is an independent project of the Acton Institute, a non-profit think tank working to "promote a free and virtuous society characterized by individual liberty and sustained by religious principles." Every Catholic high school in America is invited to apply to the Honor Roll. In 2006, nearly 1,300 completed surveys that measured academic excellence, Catholic identity and civic education. Outstanding success in each of the three areas is necessary to make the Honor Roll. Out of those 1,300 schools, 10 of the 50 Catholic high schools honored and named to the 2006 top 50 Catholic high schools were NAPC\*IS member schools!

What has this honor meant for recognized schools? Increased enrollment; powerful

publicity; sweeping recognition from local and state officials and from Bishops, to name just a few of the rewards.

In June, 2007, NAPC\*IS held its ninth National Independent Schools in Service to the Church Conference at Ave Maria University (AMU) in Naples, Florida. Dr. Dominic Aquila, Dean of Arts and Sciences, Professor of History at the University of St. Thomas, Houston, Texas was the keynote speaker and this year's recipient of the NAPC\*IS Spes Nostra Award. Dr. Aquila's keynote address, "Catholic Education, the Last Best Hope for American Democracy," identified NAPC\*IS schools as the promise and the model for the reform and future norm of Catholic education. Dr Aquila described the bold founders of NAPC\*IS schools as all sharing in the tradition of self-sacrifice that successfully built Catholic education in America from the 1830's to its recent history, when Catholic schools began to engage the world, and, by becoming corrupted by the world, lost their Catholic identity. NAPC\*IS schools, he observed, stand out in their "radical traditionalism," that is, in their reconnection to faithful Catholic principles and the Catholic intellectual tradition that seeks truth, certain in the knowledge that the Catholic Church has the fullness of truth.

The vision and mission of NAPC\*IS has been faithfully implemented for the last twelve years. In that short time, NAPC\*IS has emerged as a recognized leader in the restoration of Catholic education in America. Its influence also extends around the world in its contacts with schools in Canada and England. Recently, a parent called from Australia. Interested in starting a school, she had discovered the NAPC\*IS web site, and was calling to seek advice and the resources contained in the NAPC\*IS school start-up package.

Ed Wassell, founder and administrator of Holy Rosary Academy in Anchorage, Alaska, describes what NAPC\*IS has meant to him and his school.

Speaking personally, as a NAPC\*IS member, I cannot count the benefits of

membership over the past five years. Our accreditation is from NAPC\*IS. Our teachers are Catholic certified (the only Catholic teacher's certification program in the United States) through NAPC\*IS...Prior to NAPC\*IS, we were a good solid Catholic school that taught the Faith well and offered a good Catholic education. Today we have been named for the past three years one of the nation's top 50 Catholic High Schools by the prestigious Acton Institute and our national test scores are off the charts. Although it might be an exaggeration to say that without NAPC\*IS none of these things would have come to pass, I can say definitively that without the support and help of NAPC\*IS we never would have achieved all of the above. NAPC\*IS is doing more for true orthodox Catholic education in the United States than any other single entity.

Pope John Paul II frequently spoke of the Springtime of Hope in the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Church today. Home schools and private Catholic and independent schools are the most exciting examples of this hope-filled activity of the Holy Spirit. It is His activity that makes them possible and His grace that produces the fruits of their labor. Vocations to the priesthood and religious, and the early formation of Catholic doctors, lawyers, business leaders and parents are the fruits already realized. In abandonment to God's will and with absolute confidence in His Providence, faithful laity will continue to answer His call to homeschool and start schools.

The future of NAPC\*IS is contained in the Holy Spirit's Springtime of Hope and His promise to provide for the Catholic education of young minds and hearts. NAPC\*IS cooperates, as an instrument of the Holy Spirit in His promise. NAPC\*IS will continue as a leader in the apostolate of the laity in Catholic education to ensure the development of future leaders of the Church and society. Clear in its vision and mission, NAPC\*IS will let its light

shine before men, so that they may see the good works and, thereby, give glory to God.

Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam.

*There will be another article in a forthcoming edition of the Catholic Educator that will more deeply explore a fundamental element of the NAPC\*IS platform, the Teacher Certification Program, which is a response to a very real evil in our system of education, Regional Accreditation and the bodies that "award" it. In the meantime, please visit the NAPC\*IS web site for more information at :*

<http://www.napcis.org>.

*Eileen Cubanski co-founded St. Maria Goretti Academy, which opened in Loomis, California, in September of 1993. She also co-founded and serves as executive director of the National Association of Private Catholic and Independent School (NAPC\*IS). NAPC\*IS is a national accrediting agency and teacher certification program for private Catholic and independent schools; it serves as a professional support and resource association to assist administrators and teachers apply Roman Catholic teachings and sound academic principles to education. She has a BA in child study/elementary education and an MA in education administration.*

## ***Bucking the Trend: Brother Rice & Mt. Carmel High Schools***

By: Anthony Pienta and Kevin Schmeising, Ph.D.

A recent trend in Catholic education is that small, newer, private Catholic schools are quite successful at establishing and maintaining Catholic identity. Although this movement is worth highlighting, it is important to remember that it is not the only model for successful Catholic education.

A school's increased size does not always necessitate sacrificing sound Catholic education or an edifying Catholic culture. Although larger established schools are faced with the challenge of balancing continuity and change while not resting on past successes, many persevere in their academic excellence and vibrant Catholic orthodoxy. In 2006 the [Catholic High School Honor Roll's](#) annual Top 50 list included two such institutions. These two not only have an enrollment well above the Honor Roll average of 530 students, but are facing their unique challenges like champions.

[Brother Rice High School](#) in south Chicago is on its face the kind of institution that has floundered in the last decade. The 1,200-student all-boys school serves a diverse student body in an old big-city neighborhood, but the Christian Brothers school nonetheless has renewed its commitment to its core values and succeeded where others have failed. Brother Patrick Martin, head of the honors program, says that the school has resisted the temptation to cut back on formal theological instruction to increase enrollment, noting, "it is important to the parents whose children we educate." He articulates the purpose of the school as supporting "the primary faith community, the parish, by providing a sound understanding of what it means to be Catholic."

Brother Patrick observes worriedly that several parish elementary schools in the area have closed. But he remains upbeat because, against the odds, Brother Rice has increased its enrollment in recent years. Brother Patrick

attributes some of the enrollment increase to the publicity and reputation generated by the school's placement for three straight years on the [Catholic High School Honor Roll](#). In fact, after the school's Honor Roll placement in 2004, he noticed a one-hundred student increase.

Another large flourishing school is [Mount Carmel Academy](#) in New Orleans. The all-female, 1,250-student school is located just a few blocks from the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Canal levee breach, one of the areas most devastated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Under 12 feet of water for more than two weeks, each of the buildings on the 80-year-old campus sustained substantial damage. Students and staff were forced to scatter to neighboring states and communication with them was limited to periodic website postings. Virtually all records were lost, and no one in the city thought reopening the school would happen very quickly, if at all.

Despair and defeat were widespread feeling, except with the school's principal, Sister Camille Anne Campbell. Within weeks, the flood waters began to recede and she was able to arrive at the school to begin restoration. Without hesitation, she called on the help of parents, students, friends, and a number of the nearly 10,000 alumnae. Despite the enormity of this task, Susan Perron, a school administrator, said "the re-build, the re-population, and the resurrection of our campus are already the stuff of legend."

However, even more important than the building restoration was Sister Camille's compelling devotion to the Catholic formation of her students. Ultimately she knew the spiritual needs of her students were more important than the physical condition of the campus. Her fervent devotion to God and concern for the rigorous education at Mount

Carmel provided the motivation she needed to stay focused and restore the school. This is exactly the type of dedicated leadership that keeps numerous Catholic schools flourishing, despite facing today's many challenges.

This miraculous turn-around is no doubt attributed to the faithful leadership that recognizes the unique value of providing strong, vibrant Catholic education. Hurricane Katrina certainly gave Sister Camille a unique way to reveal her commitment to academic excellence and preparation of her students for life in the world. She also showed that giving her life in service to the students was ultimately a service to parents, to the Church, and ultimately, to God. Her devotion serves as a great example for what is required of today's successful Catholic education leaders, no matter the school's size.

Brother Rice High School and Mount Carmel Academy both exemplify what the Catholic High School Honor Roll has found to be true, that it is not so much the size or history of a school that makes it successful. Rather, all Catholic schools have the same calling, to educate and form their students in the Catholic Faith. This includes a common commitment to demanding academics and preparation of their students for life in the world, and even more, an understanding of their work as being in service to parents and to the Church. Those are and ever will be the ingredients of successful Catholic schools, no matter the size.

*Kevin Schmiesing is a research fellow at the [Acton Institute](#) and executive director of [CatholicHistory.net](#). He is a consultant to the Catholic High School Honor Roll.*

*Anthony Pienta is a project coordinator for the [Acton Institute](#) and the [Catholic High School Honor Roll](#).*

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### **About the Catholic High School Honor Roll**

*The Honor Roll is a national program recognizing America's best Catholic high schools based on the criteria of academic excellence, Catholic identity, and civic education. The Honor Roll has proven to be a strong resource for parents and a great opportunity for*

*schools to receive much-deserved recognition.*

*The primary goal of the Honor Roll is to encourage schools to educate students as effectively as possible, in a way that integrates Catholic faith and prepares students for active engagement with the world. By supporting this constructive competition, the Honor Roll provides insight into the character of Catholic secondary education and calls everyone to improve the academic and spiritual formation given to America's youth. In promoting rigorous education, the Honor Roll desires to better prepare students for fruitful vocations in politics, business, and the Church.*

*The Catholic High School Honor Roll is an independent project of the Acton Institute, an international research and educational organization. The Honor Roll was produced in consultation with a national advisory board comprised of Catholic college presidents and noted Catholic scholars. For more on Acton, please go to [www.acton.org](http://www.acton.org).*

**Questions about the Honor Roll may be directed to Anthony Pienta at (616) 454-3080, [apienta@acton.org](mailto:apienta@acton.org), or [info@chshonor.org](mailto:info@chshonor.org).**

# ***The Angelicum Academy***

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By: **Patrick S.J. Carmack, Steve Bertucci and Peter Redpath, Ph.D.**

*Wisdom begins in Wonder.*

~ Aristotle

The Angelicum Homeschool Program is a nursery-through-12th-grade curriculum for home education that supports parents seeking to foster the habits of thought and action in their children that will lead them to true happiness. Rooted in a philosophy of education that recognizes wonder as the beginning and end of learning, this program helps students of all ages to engage in conversation with the great authors of the past through the study of classic texts, and sound instruction in grammar, phonics, reading, spelling, vocabulary, listening, speaking, writing, and, for the mathematical works: arithmetic, geometry, and so on.

The Angelicum Homeschool Program is complete – including all subjects, books, guides and tests needed, for all grades. The nursery through 8th grade curriculum is conventionally organized, with a superb classics literature base (such as Aesop's Fables, Mother Goose, the Little House books, Little Women, Robinson Crusoe, Tom Sawyer, David Copperfield, etc.), but is far more challenging than the public school curricula, and exceeds the academic standards of many private and parochial schools as well. Being oriented to home education, it allows the parents to set the pace. The literature component was carefully selected for integration with the entire curriculum, good moral example, including in the supplemental lives of the saints offered, and to prepare students, in graduated steps, to read the world's finest and most influential literature in several fields collected in our Great Books program.

The 9th-12th grade integrated-literature program was designed primarily by the late Dr. Mortimer Adler (with minor changes) who called these works the Great Books. Having learned the arts of learning (i.e., the liberal arts: grammar, reading, writing, calculating, etc.) in

the elementary levels, students here begin to study the substance of a liberal education – the works of the great authors of Western civilization – masterpieces by Homer, Plato, Aristotle, St. John, St. Augustine, Ven. Bede, St. Thomas Aquinas, Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare and many others, in literature, poetry, drama, history, science and philosophy. These works constitute an on-going dialogue about the truths of man's nature and his relationship with the rest of reality, called the Great Conversation. In giving your children the opportunity to grasp this wisdom from the past, they cannot help but be led to a greater appreciation and understanding of virtue and the wonder and beauty of life, and the ability to participate in the intellectual life of the Church and culture.

The American Council on Education recently recommended 48 hours (six hours per semester) of college credit for students completing the 9th-12th grade Great Books course.

In addition to the sound philosophy at the heart of the curriculum, the Angelicum Homeschool Program allows parents the flexibility - 13 course options (subjects), more than any other program - to select only those courses they wish, when they wish, and to complete their coursework at their own pace. Most Angelicum students are doing six or seven subjects in two or three different grade levels because they have excelled in some areas, yet taken more time in others. This is a common-sense approach to education, not a one-pace-fits-all approach to unique human beings.

Sixteen important elements were brought together to complete the Angelicum curriculum:

1. Catholic religion, history and literature texts are central to our curriculum;
2. Classical education - elements of items 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8, described below, make our program distinctly classical in approach;
3. the "Good Books" - the great children's

- classics, selected by the famed Catholic classicist, the late Dr. John Senior, which are read in our nursery-8th grade literature program prepare our students for the greatest works of our culture;
4. the Great Books - the greatest classics of Western civilization, beginning with the ancient Greeks, then the Romans, Medievals and Moderns, which are studied in our 9th-12th grade literature program ;
  5. Great Books Discussion - these optional, online groups develop thinking, speaking, listening and reading skills while acquainting our students with the great ideas contained in the classics, from a Catholic perspective;
  6. the finest materials available - since we did not write the classics we are able to select from the finest illustrated editions and most up-to-date texts available in other subjects from many sources, without having to restrict our selections to our own materials;
  7. our "poetic" and integrated approach to education of the senses, imagination and intuition via the use of the natural wonder and love of the beauty of nature in young students, which was developed for older students into the Integrated Humanities Program by Drs. Quinn, Senior and Nelick;
  8. our liberal arts and generalist educational approach (from "libertas" meaning liberty or freedom from ignorance - not "liberalism" as a political view) is preparatory not merely for college, but also for life; it is not the narrow specialization or vocationalism that prepares young people for only one job, skill or specialty so often obsolete in ten years, or even less in our day;
  9. designed for homeschool or independent study, with all the attendant advantages which numerous studies have demonstrated homeschooling has over public schooling;
  10. our program is complete - nursery through 12th grade, 13 subjects, placement tests, daily lesson plans, quarterly tests, and grading;
  11. flexibility - students may progress at their own pace, in each course selected, on different grade levels - no one-size-fits-all obstacles are imposed in our program. Parents are free to choose and mix from among any, or all, courses and grade levels offered;
  12. all enrolled students are given our unique coded access to excellent online resources;
  13. Britannica's Annals (documents) of American History Online;
  14. The Oxford English Dictionary Online;
  15. Oxford Research Online; and
  16. Classical Homeschooling Magazine, available free at: [www.classicalhomeschooling.com](http://www.classicalhomeschooling.com).

*Patrick S.J. Carmack is a former Judge at the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, member of the U.S. Supreme Court Bar, former Chairman of the International Caspian Society, and President of the Angelicum Academy.*

*Steve Bertucci is a Director of the Great Books Program and has probably moderated more Great Books discussion groups (literally thousands now) than any living human!*

*Dr. Redpath is Chairman of the Angelicum Academy and a Full Professor of Philosophy at St. John's University.*

In a recent article in [Catholic Homeschooling Magazine](#), Peter Redpath and Patrick Carmack outlined the 13 points that make up the philosophy of education (as distinguished from theology; the distinctly Catholic elements are addressed elsewhere at [www.angelicum.net](http://www.angelicum.net)) for the Angelicum Homeschooling Program.

That article can be found at the following link: [http://www.classicalhomeschooling.com/html/third\\_issue\\_philedu.html](http://www.classicalhomeschooling.com/html/third_issue_philedu.html)