

Catholic Education Foundation presents

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"Love's Bond"



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*Years of Liberal Dogma Have Spawned a
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Max Hastings

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A Word from Our Editor

In 1964, Mary Perkins Ryan shocked the Catholic community in the United States with her book, *Do We Need Parochial Schools? Catholic Education in the Light of the Council*. In the typically short-sighted, benighted euphoria which co-opted conciliar authority, her response was a resounding “no.” That negative assessment was so shocking to the average Catholic because, after the initial opposition to Catholic schools of some bishops and priests of the “accommodationist” or “Americanist” mode in the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church in America maintained a constant trajectory in favor of Catholic schools. Indeed, the goal was “every Catholic child in a Catholic school” – a goal achieved for 65% of the Catholic population by the time of Ryan’s sally. Also interesting was the fact that her attempt to speak for the Council Fathers on the topic was either preemptive or presumptuous because they had not yet addressed the issue themselves – the conciliar document on Catholic education, *Gravissimum Educationis*, would not appear for yet another year! If she had waited, she would have found comments like the following:

The influence of the Church in the field of education is shown in a special manner by the Catholic school. No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth. But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were

made through baptism as they develop their own personalities, and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and man is illumined by faith. So indeed the Catholic school, while it is open, as it must be, to the situation of the contemporary world, leads its students to promote efficaciously the good of the earthly city and also prepares them for service in the spread of the Kingdom of God, so that by leading an exemplary apostolic life they become, as it were, a saving leaven in the human community.

Since, therefore, the Catholic school can be such an aid to the fulfillment of the mission of the People of God and to the fostering of the dialogue between the Church and mankind, to the benefit of both, it retains even in our present circumstances the utmost importance. Consequently this sacred synod proclaims anew what has already been taught in several documents of the magisterium, namely: the right of the Church freely to establish and to conduct schools of every type and level. And the council calls to mind that the exercise of a right of this kind



contributes in the highest degree to the protection of freedom of conscience, the rights of parents, as well as to the betterment of culture itself.

But let teachers recognize that the Catholic school depends upon them almost entirely for the accomplishment of its goals and programs. They should therefore be very carefully prepared so that both in secular and religious knowledge they are equipped with suitable qualifications and also with a pedagogical skill that is in keeping with the findings of the contemporary world. Intimately linked in charity to one another and to their students and endowed with an apostolic spirit, may teachers by their life as much as by their instruction bear witness to Christ, the unique Teacher. Let them work as partners with parents and together with them in every phase of education give due consideration to the difference of sex and the proper ends Divine Providence assigns to each sex in the family and in society. Let them do all they can to stimulate their students to act for themselves and even after graduation to continue to assist them with advice, friendship and by establishing special associations imbued with the true spirit of the Church. *The work of*

these teachers, this sacred synod declares, is in the real sense of the word an apostolate most suited to and necessary for our times and at once a true service offered to society. The Council also reminds Catholic parents of the duty of entrusting their children to Catholic schools wherever and whenever it is possible and of supporting these schools to the best of their ability and of cooperating with them for the education of their children. (n. 8, emphases added)

Unfortunately, by the time the Council had come up with its clear vision for the education of Catholic youth, the anti-school ball had been put into motion and was gathering momentum with many clergy and Religious buying into the Ryan vision. However, even where the Ryan vision was not functioning at full blast, a loss of confidence and nerve was creeping in, aided and abetted by a growing lack of understanding of what makes our schools unique and, therefore, always and everywhere necessary.

In the nineteenth century, it was eminently clear that Catholic parents could not send their children to the so-called “common” or “public” schools without endangering their faith, due to the overt anti-Catholicism of those institutions. Bishops and priests likewise made that equally clear, even threatening excommunication for those who subjected their children to such schools without a compelling need and an ecclesiastical dispensation. An in-your-face anti-Catholicism prevailed in the government schools for decades, so that my own father in the 1920s was held back in the fourth grade because he refused to recite the



“Protestant” version of the Lord’s Prayer. In the aftermath of World War II a “kinder, gentler” government school emerged, in which denominational differences were ignored or papered over – and many Catholics were deceived into thinking that all was now sweetness and light. However, they should have remembered – or been reminded by their clergy – of the insight of Pope Pius XI in *Divini Illius Magistri* (1939): “. . . 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.”

By the mid-1960s, that assessment of the Pope was coming into much sharper focus in the United States – even though many did not see it or not would acknowledge seeing it. With the advent of the seventies and eighties, only the blind could claim an inability to see it. The removal of prayer from the government schools (let’s be honest and call them what they really are) was but one of many significant moves not simply toward secularization but toward active hostility in regard to religion and religiously minded people. Truth be told, I have never been a fan of prayer in the state schools for a number of reasons, not the least because of inadequate answers to these questions: a. Whose prayer? b. Are we sprinkling holy water on an otherwise pagan environment and thus hoodwinking parents and others into thinking it is something other than it truly is?

At any rate, educational institutions which began as anti-Catholic, morphed into “religiously neutral” entities and eventually became irreligious, as Pius XI predicted. The latest example of it all came in New York City during August when it was announced that the City’s “public” schools “will mandate sex education” (see the full article on page 42 of this issue of *The*

Catholic Educator). Part of the program will provide instruction in how to use a condom. Of course, the author of the *New York Times* article fairly points out that the City’s schools have been distributing condoms “for more than twenty years,” anyway. In other words, this is but the logical end-point of a long and winding road.

Why do I go into all this history and the gory present-day tragedy? Because I think it is high-time that Catholic clergy (bishops and priests alike), teachers and parents look reality squarely in the eye and realize that it is morally impossible to submit one’s children to the godless institution known as public education. What is happening in New York is not unique to that city; it is happening – or soon will be happening – all around the country. We Catholics have to say that the very foundation of state schools is flawed and that we cannot support such a flawed philosophy of life and education. Put simply, Catholic schools are more necessary today than when Archbishop John Carroll, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and St. John Neumann began the whole system two centuries ago. In other words, use of a Catholic school is not a luxury for parents who have a few thousand extra dollars to throw around; it is a necessity – for the salvation of our children’s souls, indeed, for the salvation of our Republic – “a saving leaven in the human community,” as the Fathers of Vatican II put it. Will the clergy preach and teach that? Will parents heed them? And will the Catholic community rally around with the requisite moral and financial support?

Devotedly yours in Christ,
Reverend Peter M. J. Stravinskis, Ph.D.,
S.T.D.
Executive Director



A Note to Our Readers

The Catholic Educator is pleased to announce a new feature for our readers. Debuting in the Fall 2011 edition we will be publishing a section called “Letters to the Editor.” If you would like to comment on something you read in *The Catholic Educator*, please email Fr. Peter Stravinskias at fstravinskias@hotmail.com or write to:

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Church-run Schools Need Public Financial Support, Vatican Envoy Says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — A Vatican official praised church-run schools as valuable components of modern education, saying they deserve public financial support and must not be muzzled on moral issues.

Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, addressing a U.N. meeting in Geneva July 6, said educational systems work best when they include participation by parents and various elements of civil society, including religious organizations.

In order for that to work, he said, "public financial resources must be made available in order to assure fairness" for those promoting alternative educational programs.

In carrying out its educational role, the state "should respect the choices that parents make for their children and avoid attempts at ideological indoctrination," Archbishop Tomasi said. He cited the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which defends the freedom of parents to choose nonpublic schools and ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

"And this includes the right to make moral judgments on moral issues," the archbishop said.

He said religious organizations are often better positioned to provide education to the most vulnerable children and families, including those in remote or rural areas, those with special needs or drop-outs.

Archbishop Tomasi noted that the Catholic Church has about 200,000 primary and secondary schools located in every

continent, with about 58 million students and 3.5 million teachers.

"While protecting their identity, these schools welcome students from every ethnic and religious background and socio-economic class," he said.

Catholic schools teach children how to make "free, reasoned and value-based decisions," the archbishop said.

It's not enough for schools to convey technical information, he added. The goal of education must include formation of the person and transmission of values like personal and social responsibility, a work ethic and a sense of solidarity with others."

Archbishop Tomasi, the Vatican's representative to U.N. agencies in Geneva, was speaking at a session on global education sponsored by the U.N. Economic and Social Council. He noted that although the number of children without access to primary education is dropping, about 68 million children remain out of school.

If current trends hold, he said, the international community will not be able to meet the goal of universal primary education by 2015.

He said educational levels are directly tied to poverty levels. Another key factor is war and civil strife; some 28 million children not attending school live in countries affected by conflict, he said.

John Thavis
Catholic News Service
July 7, 2011



Why We're Going Back to Single-Sex Dorms

Student housing has become a hotbed of reckless drinking and hooking up

My wife and I have sent five children to college and our youngest just graduated. Like many parents, we encouraged them to study hard and spend time in a country where people don't speak English. Like all parents, we worried about the kind of people they would grow up to be.

We may have been a little unusual in thinking it was the college's responsibility to worry about that too. But I believe that intellect and virtue are connected. They influence one another. Some say the intellect is primary. If we know what is good, we will pursue it. Aristotle suggests in the "Nicomachean Ethics" that the influence runs the other way. He says that if you want to listen intelligently to lectures on ethics you "must have been brought up in good habits." The goals we set for ourselves are brought into focus by our moral vision.

"Virtue," Aristotle concludes, "makes us aim at the right mark, and practical wisdom makes us take the right means." If he is right, then colleges and universities should concern themselves with virtue as well as intellect.

I want to mention two places where schools might direct that concern, and a slightly old-fashioned remedy that will improve the practice of virtue. The two most serious ethical challenges college students face are binge drinking and the culture of hooking up.

Alcohol-related accidents are the leading cause of death for young adults aged 17-24.

Students who engage in binge drinking (about two in five) are 25 times more likely to do things like miss class, fall behind in school work, engage in unplanned sexual activity, and get in trouble with the law. They also cause trouble for other students, who are subjected to physical and sexual assault, suffer property damage and interrupted sleep, and end up babysitting problem drinkers.

Hooking up is getting to be as common as drinking. Sociologist W. Bradford Wilcox, who heads the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia, says that in various studies, 40%-64% of college students report doing it.

The effects are not all fun. Rates of depression reach 20% for young women who have had two or more sexual partners in the last year, almost double the rate for women who have had none. Sexually active young men do more poorly than abstainers in their academic work. And as we have always admonished our own children, sex on these terms is destructive of love and marriage.

Here is one simple step colleges can take to reduce both binge drinking and hooking up: Go back to single-sex residences.

I know it's countercultural. More than 90% of college housing is now co-ed. But Christopher Kaczor at Loyola Marymount points to a surprising number of studies showing that students in co-ed dorms (41.5%) report weekly binge drinking more



than twice as often as students in single-sex housing (17.6%). Similarly, students in coed housing are more likely (55.7%) than students in single-sex dorms (36.8%) to have had a sexual partner in the last year—and more than twice as likely to have had three or more.

The point about sex is no surprise. The point about drinking is. I would have thought that young women would have a civilizing influence on young men. Yet the causal arrow seems to run the other way. Young women are trying to keep up—and young men are encouraging them (maybe because it facilitates hooking up).

Next year all freshmen at The Catholic University of America will be assigned to single-sex residence halls. The year after, we

will extend the change to the sophomore halls. It will take a few years to complete the transformation.

The change will probably cost more money. There are a few architectural adjustments. We won't be able to let the ratio of men and women we admit into the freshman class vary from year to year with the size and quality of the pools. But our students will be better off.

John Garvey
Wall Street Journal
June 13, 2011

Mr. Garvey is president of The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.



Presenting What Is Beautiful: The Joyful Duty of Catholic Education

“Too late have I loved Thee, O Beauty, ever ancient, ever new!” St. Augustine was in his forties by the time he penned this personal lament. As readers of the *Confessions* know (and the *Confessions* has been a universal must-read for 1600 years), Augustine wasted himself for 30 years before he finally embraced the Lord in the greatest conversion story ever told. Throughout his retrospective, he refers to beauty, the need for beauty, the search for beauty. His wanderings away from the faith of his mother were intimately bound up with a search for beauty. He did not find beauty in his catechesis, nor in his early education, so he sought it in the wild passions of love and friendship. Eventually, Augustine found the Lord by realizing in very painful ways that other beauties disappointed when they were mistaken for real Beauty.

In his praise of the Lord, St. Augustine connects love and Beauty, for they are correlatives. Love is aroused by what is beautiful, beauty inspires love. We need to be inspired by what is truly beautiful, to be passionate about what is lovely. And to enjoy in the objects of natural affection a suggestion, a reflection of the Beauty that never passes.

Our nation’s Puritanical past might lead us to think that to be religious is to deny ourselves what is beautiful, but the opposite is true. The Danish movie, *Babette’s Feast*, provides a parable about a small fishing village that has driven out all that is beautiful in life in its misguided following of Christianity. The loss of beauty leads to a loss of joy and friendship. The humble cook, who is really a refugee French chef, wins a lottery fortune and uses it to prepare a sumptuous feast to celebrate the founder of

the community. In the course of the feast, the village is re-awakened, re-evangelized and re-united.

Catholic schools have a joyful duty to present what is beautiful to their students. At the center of the school, the chapel and all religious services should present a feast for the eyes, the ears, the mind and the heart. Classrooms and hallways should be tastefully decorated; students will imbibe fine works of art over the course of their years at a school. Tasteful, rich, clever visual presentations should be an important factor when considering textbook series.

Beauty has an important place in the central activity of teaching and learning. Learning certainly requires discipline, but deep down it is a feast for the mind and heart. An ancient expression describing what it means to be beautiful is, “What pleases merely by being seen.” What is beautiful does not have to be possessed, consumed to please us; merely a look is sufficient to delight us. When we hear this, we immediately think of paintings, faces, the visible things seen by the eyes. But in a more profound sense, what pleases the mind by itself, without reference to possessing something, is truly beautiful.

Many of us who teach know what this means. As young men and women, we were enchanted by our subjects and fell in love with them. Our great desire has always been to share that enchantment with our students. None expressed this desire better than the great entomologist, J. Henri Fabre. The man honored by Darwin as the “Inimitable Observer” realized the crucial importance of inspiring a love for the insects whose habits he wished to make the object of their scientific interest.



And why should I not complete my thought: the boars have muddied the clear stream; natural history, youth's glorious study, has, by dint of cellular improvements, become a hateful and repulsive thing. Well, if I write for men of learning, for philosophers, who, one day, will try to some extent to unravel the tough problem of instinct, I write also, I write above all things for the young. I want to make them love the natural history which you make them hate; and that is why, while keeping strictly to the domain of truth, I avoid your scientific prose, which too often, alas seems borrowed from some Iroquois idiom.

Dr. Paul Lockhart expresses the same, heartfelt desire in his [Mathematician's Lament](#), in which he mourns the fact that most students never get a clue in twelve years of schooling as to why mathematicians love what they do.

There is no question that if the world had to be divided into the "poetic dreamers" and the "rational thinkers" most people would place mathematicians in the latter category. Nevertheless, the fact is that there is nothing as dreamy and poetic, nothing as radical, subversive, and psychedelic, as mathematics. It is every bit as mind blowing as cosmology or physics (mathematicians conceived of black holes long before astronomers actually found any), and allows more freedom of expression than poetry, art, or music (which depend heavily on properties of the physical universe).

I recently received a lament from a graduate student in classical literature at a prestigious graduate school, one with which graduate students in all fields who entered their programs in love with a subject can sympathize:

I'm frustrated by what I see of academia. I rarely get to consider a text as literature - I

feel like there's always a huge emphasis on socio-historical context or the validity of manuscripts - and so often classes center closely around the professors' rather obscure interests....I enjoy when I can spend a day reading Homer or Ovid. I'm just learning that Classics is not really about doing that.

Teachers of literature must ensure that they spend less time training students to recognize metaphor and simile than they do inspiring them to feel the power of the beauty of the stories and poems they encounter in their classes. Of course, no teacher will succeed with every or even most students, nor can he neglect his duty to pass on things that need to be "known" about it. But he should take every opportunity he can to manifest the beauty of a subject to which he has given his own heart. When he succeeds, he has given his students something which will make a greater impression in their lives than any test they might ever pass. For, as St. Augustine also realized, every encounter with a beauty is really a meeting with the Beauty that is the goal of all our longing:

And I replied unto all the things which encompass the door of my flesh: "Ye have told me of my God, that ye are not He; tell me something of Him." And they cried out with a loud voice, "He made us." My questioning them, was my thoughts on them: and their form of beauty gave the answer.

Andrew Seeley
The Imaginative Conservative
May 27, 2011

Dr. Seeley is Executive Director of the [Institute for Catholic Liberal Education](#). He is also a tutor at [Thomas Aquinas College](#) in California, where his love has been teaching and learning with his fellow faculty and



students from the greatest minds of Western Civilization. Get the renewal started! Invite a Catholic teacher, administrator or board

member to ICLE's [Academic Retreat for Teachers!](#)



The State of Catholic Schools in the U.S.

Signs of hope despite a bleak prognosis

The Church worldwide is in the midst of a Catholic education boom. Between 1997 and 2008, the number of Catholic primary schools rose from 86,505 to 93,315—an increase of a dozen schools every week—to keep pace with a 20 percent increase in enrollment in the same period. Likewise, the number of Catholic secondary schools grew from 34,849 to 42,234—an increase of 13 schools each week—alongside a 28 percent rise in enrollment. These gains outstripped the growth in overall Catholic population (16 percent) and world population (15 percent) during the same period.

In the midst of this Catholic education boom worldwide, the Church in the United States has suffered a dramatic decline in its education apostolate. According to the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA), the number of Catholic schools fell from 8,146 to 6,980 between 2000 and 2010—a loss of 117 schools every year. Combined primary and secondary school enrollment also declined 22 percent, from 2,647,301 to 2,065,872.

The roots of this decline stretch back decades. “School enrollment reached its peak during the early 1960s when there were more than 5.2 million students in almost 13,000 schools across the nation,” according to the latest NCEA school data report. In 1990, some 2.5 million students were enrolled in 8,719 schools. The 1990s saw the loss of 573 schools, even as enrollment grew by 150,000. The enrollment gains of the 1990s, however, were wiped away by the steep declines of the last decade.

According to statistics published in the 2011 *Catholic Almanac*, the 10 dioceses with the highest combined primary and secondary school enrollment are Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, Los Angeles, Brooklyn, Cleveland, St. Louis, Cincinnati, St. Paul-Minneapolis, and Boston. On the other hand, 10 dioceses—Juneau, Anchorage, Lubbock (Texas), Fairbanks, Baker (Oregon), Las Cruces (New Mexico), Amarillo, Pueblo (Colorado), and Cheyenne—have total enrollments of under 1,000 students.

The dioceses with the highest and lowest numbers of students, however, are not necessarily the dioceses where Catholic schools are proportionately strongest and weakest. The 15 dioceses with the highest ratio of Catholic school students to overall Catholic population are Covington (Kentucky), Memphis, Louisville, Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Wichita, Jefferson City, Omaha, Mobile, Evansville (Indiana), Jackson (Mississippi), Kansas City-St. Joseph, St. Louis, Lexington (Kentucky), and New Orleans.

Conversely, the 15 dioceses with the weakest culture of Catholic education—the dioceses with the lowest ratio of Catholic school students to overall Catholic population—are Brownsville, Texas (which has the lowest ratio), Las Cruces, Las Vegas, Fresno, Lubbock, El Paso, San Bernardino, Laredo (Texas), San Angelo (Texas), Pueblo, Corpus Christi, Anchorage, Fort Worth, Juneau, and Dallas. Catholic school culture, in general, is thus strongest near the Ohio River, the central Mississippi River, and parts of the Gulf Coast; it is weakest in portions of Texas, California, and in Alaska.



Latinos and Catholic schools

Thirty-five percent of Catholics in the United States are Hispanic, as are the majority of Catholics under 30.

“Despite research that indicates that Hispanic students in Catholic schools are dramatically better prepared academically for postsecondary education and productive careers than Hispanic students in other kinds of schools, only 3 percent of school-aged Hispanic children are enrolled in Catholic schools,” Marie Powell, executive director of the Secretariat of Catholic Education at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, told *CWR*. Blessed with burgeoning Catholic populations, the Texas and California dioceses with particularly low ratios of Catholic school students to Catholics are facing steep challenges in educating this future generation of Catholics.

“Adapting the culture of Catholic schools and parishes” so that the presence of Latino Catholics is more highly “valued and appreciated” is thus one of the leading challenges facing Catholic education in the United States, says Powell. She described two initiatives that have shown promise in helping “Catholic schools more accurately reflect the changing demographics of the Catholic Church in the United States.” In the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the Catholic Education Foundation has made 110,000 tuition awards totaling \$108 million since 1987. The University of Notre Dame’s Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) offers an English as a New Language program intended to help faculty teach students whose native language is not English.

In a 2008 report, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a leading conservative education think-tank, lauded ACE as “a sort of Teach For America for inner-city parochial schools” that “shows much promise.”

Noting that there are nearly 700,000 empty seats in Catholic schools and that the “dioceses with the highest number of empty seats are located around the largest metropolitan areas with large numbers of Latinos,” a University of Notre Dame task force in 2009 set forth the ambitious goal of increasing the number of Hispanic students in Catholic schools from 290,000 to one million by 2020.

Holy Cross Father Joe Corpora, who heads ACE’s Catholic School Advantage campaign, told *CWR* that “everyone—bishops, superintendents, pastors, principals, school boards, parents—is interested in this initiative of enrolling more Latino children in our Catholic schools.”

“There is a lot of work to do,” he adds. “There is an urgency to the task.... The entire approach to recruiting and welcoming Hispanic families and children is different from how one would recruit non-Hispanic children.”

The task force’s 2009 report found that “affordability was the first and most commonly cited reason why parents did not place their children in Catholic schools.” In addition, the report found that Latino parents had difficulty obtaining information about Catholic schools, that schools needed to address daycare and transportation issues, and that “language barriers are real—parents expressed the desire for Spanish-speaking contacts at the school to provide information and guidance.”



“Among Hispanics, Catholic schools were considered privileges only for the very wealthy,” explains Donald Miller, the Diocese of Fort Worth’s superintendent of schools. “New immigrants to our country come with little or no knowledge or history of attending Catholic schools, and a good many without the financial resources to seek them out.”

The number of Catholics in the Diocese of Fort Worth has increased almost tenfold since its formation in 1969, says Miller, and the diocese has built nearly a dozen new parishes in the past 15 years. “Balancing the needs of the parishes for space and services against the needs for more schools has been difficult,” he says. Nonetheless, the diocese has made substantial investments in Catholic education. “We have torn down and totally rebuilt one of the four center-city schools, built an addition doubling one of them in size, and renovated the other two. The diocese committed more than \$7 million to these four projects,” he says.

In addition, Fort Worth Bishop Kevin Vann launched a successful capital campaign that raised \$10 million in scholarship endowment funds. Still, financial challenges remain: “While the diocese and the local parishes and schools provided, in total, more than \$2 million in tuition assistance [this year], the demonstrated need for the current school year exceeded \$4.5 million,” says Miller.

Other challenges

Making greater inroads among the Latino majority of Catholic children is not the only challenge facing Catholic schools in the United States today. With the average elementary school tuition now at \$3,383 and the average secondary school tuition at

\$8,182, the same concerns about affordability that keep Latino parents from sending their children to Catholic schools are barriers to other parents as well. As expensive as tuition is for many Catholic families, it does not meet the actual per-pupil cost of Catholic schooling (\$5,436 for elementary schools, \$10,808 for secondary schools), according to the NCEA. In contrast, the average per-pupil cost for elementary and secondary students at the nation’s public schools is \$10,297.

Costs have risen largely because of the collapse of vocations to the religious life in the United States; the number of women religious (in previous decades the primary educators in Catholic schools) declined from 179,954 in 1965 to 57,544 in 2010. Today, only 2.6 percent of teachers in Catholic schools are nuns, 0.1 percent are brothers, and 0.3 percent are clergy, according to the NCEA; 84 percent are laywomen, and 13 percent are laymen.

Catholic schools have thus experienced a transition “from a basically free workforce in the persons of religious priests, brothers, and women (supported by religious communities) to one comprised predominantly of the laity, who rightly must receive a just wage and benefits,” says George Henry, superintendent of Catholic education for the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

“Loss of the living endowment contributed by the ministry of the religious had serious financial implications for operating schools,” says Dr. Dan Peters, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph. “Within the last school year, the cost of K-12 education in our diocese was more than \$79 million.”



“What is the greatest challenge facing our Catholic schools today? Providing just compensation for our staff while protecting our families,” says Daryl Hagan, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Evansville. School principals as well as diocesan school leaders find this to be a difficult balancing act. “Our greatest challenge today is growing our annual fund so that we can continue to offer competitive salaries, full benefits, and a generous pension plan to our teachers, while maintaining an affordable tuition for our students’ families,” says Chris Fay, principal of Christian Brothers High School in Memphis.

While New York, Los Angeles, Houston, Phoenix, and many cities in the South and Southwest have experienced population growth over the last six decades, numerous cities across the Northeast and Midwest are waning. Since 1950, Buffalo’s population has declined by 310,000, Baltimore’s by 312,000, Pittsburgh’s by 366,000, Cleveland’s by 484,000, and St. Louis’ by 500,000. Philadelphia has lost 525,000 residents; Chicago, 770,000; and Detroit, 939,000.

These demographic changes have had a devastating effect on the nation’s Catholic schools. “When Catholic school enrollment peaked in 1965, no one could foresee that shifting demographics and rising operational costs would force the closing of half of all parochial schools over the next 50 years,” says Peters.

“We are experiencing great changes in the demographics of the Catholic population,” adds Dr. Jim Rigg, superintendent of Catholic schools for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. “Many Catholics are moving into suburban areas, leaving urban schools

with very little Catholic base. We have supported many of our urban schools through a number of organized programs, but difficulties still persist.”

While “there is a tremendous sense of Catholicity surrounding the city of Cincinnati,” continued Rigg, “the Cincinnati area is shrinking as people move south and west. Not only are fewer Catholics attending our schools, but we have a shrinking population base throughout the archdiocese.”

“Without a doubt, finances and demographic shifts present the biggest challenges to Catholic education,” concurs Leisa Schulz, superintendent of schools for the Archdiocese of Louisville. Nonetheless, she says, other challenges are present: “articulating the value of Catholic schools; continually enhancing and improving academic and faith formation programs; identifying appropriate governance structures and providing ongoing training for board members and balancing a ‘systems approach’ with individual initiative and ownership at the local level; and cultivating future leaders of Catholic schools.”

The abandonment of the practice of the faith by large numbers of the nation’s Catholics also poses a significant challenge to the future of Catholic schools. “Fewer families participating in Catholic parish life certainly affects their interest in choosing a Catholic school for their children,” says the USCCB’s executive director of education Powell. “The challenge for stabilizing enrollment in Catholic schools is closely linked to the success of New Evangelization efforts to invite and motivate non-participating Catholics to become active in the faith and to have participating Catholics see the link between a Catholic school



education and the future they wish for their children.”

Miller, Fort Worth’s superintendent, agrees. “Certainly, a declining vibrancy in parish life and Sunday Mass attendance over the last decades have impacted parents’ priorities and understanding of their responsibility as their children’s primary educators, including formation in the Catholic faith.”

In addition, the three decades following the close of the Second Vatican Council saw an increasing number of Catholic parents, apostolates, and publications become concerned about the loss of Catholic identity and deficiencies in catechesis in some Catholic schools.

In a report delivered to the U.S. bishops in June 1997, Archbishop Daniel Buechlein of Indianapolis gave authoritative expression to many of these concerns by finding a “consistent trend of doctrinal incompleteness and imprecision” in the catechetical series in use in the nation’s Catholic schools and religious education programs. Widespread doctrinal deficiencies, according to the archbishop, included “insufficient attention to the Trinity and the Trinitarian structure of Catholic beliefs and teachings...an obscured presentation of the centrality of Christ in salvation history and an insufficient emphasis on the divinity of Christ...an indistinct treatment of the ecclesial context of Catholic beliefs and magisterial teachings...an insufficient recognition of the transforming effects of grace...a pattern of inadequate presentation of the sacraments...pattern of deficiency in the teaching on original sin and sin in general...[and] a meager exposition of Christian moral life.”

In the years that followed, as publishers more frequently sought a formal declaration from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops that their works were in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, some of the worst defects were remedied.

Nonetheless, concerns about Catholic identity remain. In 2007, an Oakland Catholic high school performed the rock musical *Hair*, cautioning that the play was for mature audiences only. “Four Catholic high schools in the Archdiocese of San Francisco are scheduled to host a performance of the condom-endorsing sex-education play *Secrets*,” *California Catholic Daily* reported in 2009. In spring 2011, the website Catholic Lane published an article advising parents on how to respond to Catholic school teachers and administrators who insist on showing R-rated movies as part of the curriculum. “In many struggling dioceses...the schools’ Catholic identity has been slowly eroded, replaced with focuses on athletics, academics, or whatever other educational avenue the tuition-paying families desire,” the Fordham Institute stated in its 2008 report.

Within this context, education leaders in the dioceses with the most successful Catholic school programs have repeatedly emphasized the importance of a strong Catholic identity. In 2007, Bishop Roger Foys of Covington mandated that the *Didache Series*, widely recognized for its doctrinal fidelity (and sold by Ignatius Press, the publisher of this magazine), be used in high school religion classes and religious education programs. “The teaching of the Catholic faith in our schools and parish religious education programs needed to be uniform, consistent, and thorough,” he said at the time.



“The school must have a vibrant Catholic identity,” Archbishop Robert Carlson of St. Louis said in a March 2011 pastoral letter. “It must be clearly and unquestionably a Catholic school, and everything about the school’s academic and formation programs must be grounded in the teaching and practice of the Roman Catholic Church. Every person in a Catholic school—regardless of his or her faith tradition or social, economic, or ethnic background—should be growing in their understanding and appreciation for what the Catholic Church teaches.”

“Our schools seek to be authentically Catholic,” Archbishop Thomas Rodi of Mobile told *CWR*. “Parents know...that Catholics are a small minority in our archdiocese. They know that their children are growing up in a society which is increasingly secular and pluralistic and where their children are exposed to many competing sets of values that are often un-Christian, if not anti-Christian. In addition to seeking a great education for their children, they wish that their children attend a Catholic school where the values and beliefs taught at home are reinforced and witnessed to at school.”

“The Catholic culture of our schools permeates every class and activity of our schools because we view the formation of disciples of Jesus Christ as our mission,” says Bob Voboril, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Wichita. “We are Catholic first, Catholic every place, and Catholic all the time.”

“More than crucifixes displayed on the walls and students wearing plaid, a Catholic school must invite its students into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ,” added Dan Peters of the Diocese of Kansas City-St.

Joseph. Quoting that diocese’s head, Bishop Robert Finn, Peters says, “Catholic schools exist to help parents in what is their most important duty—to form holy children and to help them get to heaven.”

Another sign of hope is the increase in vocations for two already-thriving religious communities whose members teach in schools. Twenty-seven women entered the 270-member Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia of Nashville last year, and 21 entered the 110-strong Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist. Both communities emphasize the wearing of a full habit and fidelity to the teaching of the Church; the average age of a Nashville Dominican is 36, while the average age of a member of the Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist is 26.

Education leaders in the dioceses with the most successful Catholic school programs also spoke of the importance of strong episcopal leadership. “When Archbishop Robert J. Carlson became the new archbishop of St. Louis almost two years ago, he declared that ‘Catholic schools are my first priority,’” says Miller.

“Bishop Gerald Gettelfinger [bishop of Evansville since 1989] is an education bishop,” says Hagan.

“I believe our schools are strong because of the great support of our bishop [Ronald Gainer],” adds Tim Weaver, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Lexington. “Four of our 17 schools were newly constructed within the last four years, and we are currently creating plans for two more new facilities.”

Amid the collapse of Catholic primary and secondary education in the United States,



episcopal support has helped lead to two extraordinary success stories: Memphis and Wichita.

Mary McDonald is superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Memphis, and she credits Bishop J. Terry Steib with the growth of schools in the diocese. With his support, she says, “we have increased the number of schools during the past 12 years from 16”—five of which were a year from closing—“to 29. We reopened eight long-closed schools in the inner city to address a population in poverty [and] opened a new high school for 1,000 and a few new elementary schools.”

“I was shocked that our schools were closing,” Bishop Steib said in 2008. “I thought—that’s not the Church’s way. Catholic schools are meant to make a difference in people’s lives. They are the primary vehicle for evangelization.”

In 1998, Bishop Steib hired McDonald to reopen some of the closed schools. The *Memphis Commercial-Appeal* reported that McDonald’s success followed a brief 1999 meeting with Pope John Paul II, during which she asked him to pray for the Memphis schools. A month later, two Protestant businessmen gave \$10 million, allowing for the reopening of several inner-city schools in one of the nation’s most violent urban areas. While the majority of the students in these inner-city schools are non-Catholic, all are required to attend Mass and pray the Rosary weekly, according to the Fordham Institute.

In Wichita, all Catholic primary and secondary schools have been tuition-free for Catholic students since 2002. Msgr. Thomas McGread, a legendary local pastor from 1968 to 1999, challenged his parishioners to donate 5 percent of their income to allow all

of the parish’s children to attend the parish school for free. After parishioners obliged, he challenged them to donate 8 percent of their income so that the parish could pay for the Catholic high school tuition of any child in the parish. Again, the parishioners obliged. According to the Fordham Institute, Msgr. McGread’s vision spread throughout the diocese under the leadership of Bishop Eugene Gerber (1982-2001) and Voboril, who has served as superintendent since 1993.

Today, under the leadership of Bishop Michael Jackels, “Catholic schools in the Diocese of Wichita continue to grow because of our parishes’ commitment to fund the Catholic education of parish families without the need to charge tuition at the elementary or secondary levels,” Voboril told *CWR*. “Because of the tremendous generosity of our parishes to Catholic education and a growing commitment to serving all families regardless of income levels, ethnic background, language capability, or academic ability, our schools are unusually diverse. We have more than 2,600 ethnic minority students...and more than 700 students who come from homes where English is not the primary language.”

“With high unemployment, finances are a challenge,” he added. “However, our greater challenge is to maintain a strong sense of parish involvement in an increasingly secular culture.”

In 1972, President Richard Nixon’s Panel on Nonpublic Education found that the future of Catholic schools was in danger because of “the middle-class exodus from cities; the growing number of low-income students unable to afford tuition; declining church attendance; increasing costs due to aging buildings and expensive staff; rising tuition



rates; and constitutional issues regarding direct government aid,” in the summarizing words of a 2008 White House report.

“All, or most, of the statement may be true,” says Memphis’ Mary McDonald. “However, that does not stop us from doing what it takes to provide Catholic education, and to work to make it affordable and accessible for all God’s children. I have heard all the

reasons why we are supposed to fail, but we still succeed. Catholic education is worth it, and we must seek continuous improvement in all areas.”

Jeff Ziegler
Catholic World Report
June 2011



Catholic University of America Commencement Address

*122nd Annual Commencement
Address by John A. Boehner,
the 61st Speaker of the United States House
of Representatives,
East Portico, Basilica of the National Shrine
of the Immaculate Conception
May 14, 2011*

President Garvey, thanks for the warm welcome. I don't know about you, but I began my day by counting my blessings...my wife, my two daughters, my 11 brothers and sisters, this great country of ours, and the privilege you have given me to address CUA's Class of Two-Thousand-and-Eleven.

This university has stood over the years, and stands today, as the center of Catholic intellectual life in America. Now, I am a loyal alumnus of Xavier, another great Catholic university. But being here today, with your new president, with Cardinal Wuerl, and all the distinguished faculty and trustees ... let me say how impressed I am with the continued growth and success of this institution, and that I am truly humbled to take part in this ceremony.

Just two Sundays ago, I attended Mass here at the Basilica. Looking up, pondering the power and the glory of the Blessed Mother, I felt the tug of a memory...one from before Xavier...

I played football in high school. The Moeller High School football team was the Moeller Crusaders. And our coach, Gerry Faust, made sure we earned every bit of that name. For him, there was no distinction between the spiritual life in the Church and the physical grind of the football field. He made no bones about it. He would tell us in no

uncertain terms that life is a precious gift from God, and therefore making the most of one's life is a direct form of devotion to the Virgin Mary.

He'd have the whole team kneel down and pray the Hail Mary before every meeting, every practice, and every game. Then we'd go out and smash heads with the other team for four quarters...all in the name of the Blessed Mother. That gives you an idea of the kind of guy Coach Faust was, and still is. And it was the basis for a lesson he taught us, one I've been repeating ever since: 'There's nothing in life you can't achieve if you're willing to work hard enough and make the sacrifices necessary to succeed.'

Graduates, I truly believe that if you maintain that mindset, you can accomplish just about anything. After all, we live in America; a land of hope, opportunity and freedom, where you can be whatever you want to be. That would be an advantage each of you would have no matter which school you decided to attend.

But Catholic [University] has prepared you in a way no other institution can. The focus of your development here has been getting you to grapple more with WHOM you want to be than WHAT you want to be. You've been challenged to think rationally, and to use your heart and your conscience to guide your words and your actions. Let me tell you, there are no apps for these skills...

Of course, to whom much is given, much is expected. That's why each of you must be willing to work hard and make the sacrifices necessary to succeed.



What does ‘hard work’ and ‘sacrifice’ entail?

First and foremost, **humility**. If you remember one word I’ve said today, it should be ‘humility.’

Growing up with 11 brothers and sisters, playing for Coach Faust, serving in the United States Congress, I’ve learned that no one who succeeds in life does it alone. You must be willing to lean on others, listen to others, and yes, love others.

Tony Snow, a great public servant and former White House press secretary who lost his life to cancer, stood at this lectern and told the class of 2007 that ‘to love is to acknowledge that life is not about you.’ ‘I want you to remember that,’ he said, ‘It’s not about you. It’s a hard lesson, a lot of people go through life and never learn it. It’s to submit willingly, heart and soul, to things that matter.’ Tony’s wisdom is timeless.

Recently, I was asked if there’s a special prayer I say before going into meetings with the president. Well, I always ask God for the courage and wisdom to do his will and not mine. Serving others – that’s not just how I lead in the Congress, it’s how I lead my life.

You’re also going to need some **patience** along the way. Trust me on this. I know that’s not a word you’d typically associate with an occasion wrapped in pomp, but patience is how we come closer to knowing God’s will. ‘In your patience possess your souls,’ according to Luke.

After Xavier, I ended up operating a small business, which got me more involved in my community. From there, I stumbled into politics. Certainly wasn’t something I imagined I would be doing when I was

sitting where you are now. But again, it’s ‘WHOM’ we want to be that helps determine ‘WHAT’ we want to be.

I came to Congress in 1991, and before long, found myself in the leadership ranks of my party. Being called a ‘rising star’ ... that was heady stuff. But then, in the fall of 1998, I lost the support of my colleagues and my leadership post.

Now I would love to stand here and tell you I just shrugged it off and moved on, but that wouldn’t be true. The truth is that I was devastated. I wasn’t going to let anyone see me sweat, but I was down. Down ... but never out.

Because ‘nobody,’ Hemingway once wrote... ‘Nobody ever lives their life all the way up, except bullfighters.’

So I told my staff, we’re not going to talk our way back. We’re going to earn our way back. I was going to let my work speak for itself. I was going to be patient.

Of course, your humility and your patience are supported by your **faith**. In your journey through life, faith will be your constant partner – if you let it.

I’ve been back in the leadership ranks of my party for more than five years now. I knew what I was getting into. But like any other commitment you’ll make in life, it demanded some soul-searching.

The morning of the leadership elections in 2006, I went to seven a.m. Mass, and the question kept tugging at me: Am I sure I want to do this? Am I ready?

I struggled with this in my mind, asking the Blessed Mother for her guidance. Finding no



answers. Then, after having breakfast, my cell phone rang. It was a number I vaguely recognized. I picked it up. It was Coach Faust, calling to wish me luck and tell me he knew I could do it. Now I've never gotten a phone call from the Blessed Mother, and I don't expect I ever will. But I gotta tell you, that was pretty darned close.

You know, a journalist once asked Mother Teresa how she persevered in the face of all the despair she had seen. Mother replied, 'God has not called me to be successful. He has called me to be faithful.'

Over the years, I've carried in my heart a similar code my parents taught me: you do the right thing for the right reasons, and good things will happen.

So there you have it: humility, patience, and faith – the raw material of hard work and sacrifice. They will take you as far as you want to go.

Graduates, these are just some of my life's lessons. You'll learn some of your own, and when you do, don't wait to share them. The days go slow, but the years go fast. Your parents know what I'm talking about.

One more thing, just a favor I'd like to ask: by all means, take your work seriously, but don't take yourself too seriously.

Looking back on his life, the great Irish writer Frank McCourt said if he could travel back and visit his twenty-something self, he'd take him out for a steak, a potato, and a pint. 'I'd give myself a good talking to,' he wrote. 'Straighten up, throw back those shoulders, and stop mumbling.'

To that, I'd only add: just relax, and be on time.

I began here by reflecting on my blessings, on all the things for which I'm thankful. But you may have noticed something about my list. The good things in life aren't things. They are people. They are values. They are our birthrights.

For when it's all said and done, we are but mere mortals doing God's work here on Earth. Put a better way – no, put the best way: remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

All right, off you go. Good luck, God bless, and congratulations to all.



Can Catholic Schools Be Saved?

Over the past several decades, in urban centers across the country, thousands of schools have been shuttered – a trend with implications for more than just the nation's Catholics.

In the fall of 2007, word quietly spread through the nation's capital that a dozen Catholic schools run by the Archdiocese of Washington were in dire financial straits. These were not just any schools: The specter of closure had haunted these 12 before, when financial problems had surfaced a decade earlier. At that time, the archbishop of Washington, James Cardinal Hickey, had refused to allow the shuttering of any more schools serving the poorest families in his archdiocese. His solution was to create a unique arrangement whereby these schools would pool resources in order to stay afloat. Known as the Center City Consortium, the school grouping had appeared for several years to be a success; test scores were up, and millions of dollars had been raised.

In time, however, the contributions dried up, and deficits accumulated. So when the archdiocese scheduled a meeting to discuss the future of the consortium, Catholic-school advocates feared the worst. School closures are always devastating to the Church and to the families affected – but this was more painful still. An enormous effort had been waged on behalf of these schools for ten years, and still they were in peril. Did their situation suggest a much broader problem – that urban Catholic education might be doomed?

On September 7, 2007, the new archbishop of Washington, Donald Wuerl, delivered the news no one wanted to hear but that everyone silently expected: The schools'

financial challenges had become overwhelming. They were no longer sustainable.

The struggles of the Center City Consortium are simply another chapter in the tragedy of America's disappearing inner-city Catholic schools. Over the past several decades, in urban centers across the country, thousands of schools have been shuttered – a trend with implications for more than just the nation's Catholics. In several of America's cities, public schools have long been dangerous or academically troubled; for families with means, the solution has been to send their children to expensive private schools or to move to better public-school districts. But for poor families struggling to make ends meet, neither private-school tuition nor a house in the suburbs has been an option. Often, the only recourse for children from these families – many of whom are minorities, and are not even Catholic – has been a local Catholic school.

The plight of these institutions, then, should concern everyone who cares about reducing educational inequality, ending cycles of poverty, and turning around America's inner cities. But in order to figure out how to resuscitate urban Catholic education, it is crucial first to understand precisely how it arrived at its current predicament. There is, to begin, the long history of Catholic schools in the United States – their dramatic rise, their unexpected decline, and their ever-shifting place in America's education landscape. And there is the uncomfortable interaction between faith and public policy, which has led to contentious public debates that have driven decades of controversial and often contradictory decisions by state



legislatures, the courts, Congress, and the White House.

This tension raises fundamental questions for both the Church and the state. How important is the Catholic in Catholic schooling? And how should the government interact with a deeply rooted and beneficial, but religiously affiliated, sector of schools? These longstanding philosophical issues underlie an urgent and practical problem: What, if anything, can be done to save the hundreds of Catholic schools currently on the brink of closure – as well as the thousands more fast approaching the edge?

The rise of Catholic education

To imagine what America would look like without Catholic schools, it is useful to consider that our republic has never been without them – for these schools long pre-date the American founding.

In 1606, in what is now St. Augustine, Florida, the Franciscan Order founded the first Catholic school on what would eventually become American shores, in order "to teach children Christian doctrine, reading, and writing." At first, expansion was slow: As education historians Thomas Hunt and James Carper note, in the 1600s and 1700s, schooling in America was unsystematic, unregulated, and discontinuous; though some colonies required children to be educated, families and churches developed schools organically, and those schools reflected the preferences and traditions particular to their communities.

Catholic religious orders took the lead in developing secondary schools. In 1677, Jesuits founded a preparatory school for boys in Newtown, Maryland; their second

was established in Bohemia Manor, on Maryland's Eastern Shore, in the 1740s. The Sisters of Saint Ursula founded the Ursuline Academy for girls in largely Catholic New Orleans in 1727.

In the early 1800s, parochial schools – those affiliated with parishes – emerged and became the foundation for Catholic elementary schools. During this time, however, Catholics comprised only about 3% of America's population. Though the number of Catholics in the United States grew with the Louisiana Purchase, the nation and its schools were still overwhelmingly Protestant. Moreover, the Church in the United States was still small and organizationally primitive, with few priests and churches and even fewer resources. So Catholics operated a relatively small number of schools, mostly in Maryland and Pennsylvania, states with traditions of religious toleration.

In the first decades of the 19th century, the few Catholic schools that did exist often received public support, typically from local governments. But concerns over government aid to religious institutions, as well as growing anti-immigrant sentiment, brought these arrangements to an end. They also played a part in the emergence of government-funded "common schools," the predecessors of today's public-school system. Designed to counter what some saw as objectionable influences – immigration, religious and ethnic diversification, and urbanization – and to provide a standard education to all students, common schools aimed to advance both education and assimilation. They grew rapidly and enrolled significant numbers of the nation's children; consequently, in the decades before the Civil War, there were still only about 200 Catholic schools nationwide.



But the waves of immigrants that swept to America's shores in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th would have major implications for American education, particularly Catholic schools. Urban public-school systems, still in their formative years, quickly became overwhelmed by the massive influx of students. In 1881, New York had to refuse admission to nearly 10,000 children because the city lacked classroom space; in Chicago in 1886, had all students reported for school as required, there would have been room for only one-third of them.

But it wasn't merely that additional schools were needed; it was that new schools willing and able to serve these particular young Americans were needed. Nearly all of the approximately 17 million immigrants who entered the United States between 1850 and 1900 came from Europe, and many from predominantly Catholic countries like Italy and Ireland. By the turn of the 20th century, America had become 16% Catholic.

During this era, anti-immigrant bigotry spread and intensified and, in some places, received the government's imprimatur. Nebraska and Hawaii passed legislation restricting schools' ability to teach foreign languages. Illinois and Wisconsin enacted laws banning any education in foreign languages, thus effectively dismantling the states' German Catholic and Lutheran parochial schools. Oregon passed laws requiring students to attend public schools – a direct assault on the right of families, Catholic or otherwise, to educate their children as they saw fit. And at the federal level, former speaker of the House James G. Blaine introduced a constitutional amendment in 1875 that would have strictly forbidden any government funding of schools run by "any religious sect." The

Maine congressman's proposal passed overwhelmingly in the House – by a vote of 180 to seven – but was defeated narrowly in the Senate. Within 15 years, however, 29 states had "Blaine Amendments" in their own constitutions.

As government officials were closing off alternatives to public education, they were also giving Catholic families good reason to want to distance themselves from government-run schools. Non-denominational Protestantism was a cornerstone of many public schools; Bible-reading was often mandatory (usually from a Protestant Bible). Some textbooks even contained anti-Catholic material.

Across the nation, these developments convinced many Catholics that their sons and daughters required schools of their own. Education historian Diane Ravitch notes that New York City's Catholic clergy moved to protect children from "Protestant propaganda" by discouraging them from attending the city's public schools. In 1884, at the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, bishops required all parishes to establish schools and required all Catholic parents to have their children attend them.

Church leaders and concerned families received a major boost in 1925, with the landmark Supreme Court decision *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*. In that case, the Court declared state requirements that students attend public schools to be unconstitutional, and provided broad protection to private education. The opinion thus cleared the way for Catholics to build their own system of schools, free from much of the government interference and obstruction they had theretofore endured.



The response was astounding. Led by parishes (rather than by largely independent religious orders), Catholic schools were built and populated at a remarkable rate. In 1875, there had been fewer than 1,500 Catholic schools in America; by 1930, thanks to strong support for Catholic education from Rome, that number had increased to more than 10,000.

The massive post-war Baby Boom was the final catalyst, producing nearly 80 million American children who needed schools. Between 1941 and 1960, non-public-school enrollment, driven by Catholic schools, grew by 117%. When it reached its zenith in the mid-1960s, the nation's Catholic K-12 education system maintained more than 13,000 schools serving more than 5 million children – approximately 12% of all American students. Most of these schools were in America's cities, and particularly its older cities in the Northeast and Upper Midwest, such as Boston, Chicago, Detroit, and Pittsburgh. In these areas, Catholic schools represented a huge portion of the primary and secondary education system: For example, in 1960, approximately 360,000 students attended New York City's Catholic schools – 37% of the average daily public-school attendance.

Road to perdition

The swiftness of Catholic schools' rise in the first half of the 20th century makes more remarkable what followed: their even faster decline in the decades after. Hundreds of schools closed in the second half of the 1960s, and new starts failed to make up the difference.

A number of forces conspired to bring about the change. First, by the middle of the 20th century, anti-Catholic bias had eased

significantly. As the torrent of European immigrants slowed to a trickle, nativist anger toward Catholics subsided sharply. Catholics had also helped their own cause by making valuable, visible contributions to America in the previous decades, such as their founding of a wide array of public charities and their loyal service in World Wars I and II. By 1960, a Roman Catholic had even been elected president of the United States. Moreover, important changes made through the Second Vatican Council – such as allowing masses to be said in languages other than Latin, and encouraging Catholics to build bridges to other faiths – modernized and demystified the Church in the eyes of many non-Catholics. As a result, in the 1960s and '70s, a growing number of parents and pastors no longer considered it imperative that Catholic children attend parish schools.

Massive demographic shifts also played a part. With more resources at their disposal than their parents or grandparents had, blue-collar, middle-class families – often Catholic – were able to leave the cities for homes in America's growing suburbs. Since many of these parents chose public schools for their children, the number of new suburban Catholic schools fell far short of the number of urban Catholic schools emptied by the exodus.

Finally, expenses were on the rise. Thousands of urban Catholic schools were constructed before the turn of the 20th century; by the 1960s, they were aging and in need of repair. Human costs, too, were growing: In 1920, 92% of the schools' staff were "religious" – nuns, priests, or brothers. Since teaching was their billet, these employees were virtually free. By 1970, however, more than half of Catholic-school principals and teachers were lay. Unlike



their religious predecessors, these educators required salaries and benefits; moreover, they were increasing in number precisely as the growth of public-school unions and collective bargaining was pushing teacher and administrator salaries higher in the public sector. In order for Catholic schools to remain competitive, the compensation they offered had to increase.

In hindsight, it is easy to see how these forces would interact to the detriment of Catholic schools. But at the time it was far from obvious what their effect would be. In 1970, the declining number of schools was not widely known; if it had been, even a perspicacious observer might have written it off as an anomaly.

One person on whom these developments were not lost was Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Then serving as counselor for urban affairs to President Nixon, Moynihan pulled together a panel to study the needs of private K-12 education, with a focus on the decline of inner-city Catholic schools. Internally, the effort was supported by, among others, assistant to the president (and future Catholic-schools benefactor) Peter Flanigan and a young Moynihan aide (and future U.S. assistant secretary of education), Chester Finn. Issued in the spring of 1972, the panel's final report predicted that, unless steps were taken, alternatives to public schools would all but disappear; the greatest impact, the report noted, would be felt in "large urban centers, with especially grievous consequences for poor and lower middle-class families in racially changing neighborhoods where the nearby nonpublic school is an indispensable stabilizing factor."

The panel recommended a number of policy changes, including school vouchers and

facilities assistance. For its part, the Nixon administration took the recommendations to heart: In 1973, the president's tax-reform proposal included tax credits for private-school tuition, and Treasury Secretary George Shultz was dispatched to champion the plan before Congress.

Despite the Nixon administration's efforts, however, the 1970s brought even more closures. In that decade alone, more than 1,700 schools were shuttered. Moynihan stayed on the case after being elected to the U.S. Senate in 1976 as a Democrat from New York, working with a Republican colleague from Oregon, Robert Packwood, to pass education tax-credit legislation. But that effort, and a number of similar proposals by the Reagan administration, came to naught. Throughout the 1980s, many of America's cities continued to hemorrhage population and wealth, and the number of Catholic schools continued to fall. Nearly 1,000 more schools were lost, and enrollment declined by more than half a million.

But the raw numbers don't tell the full story. As more and more Catholic schools closed, those that remained were changing in character. Fewer nuns were in the classrooms, and they were being replaced by young lay (occasionally non-Catholic) teachers. They educated growing numbers of non-Catholic students. Grumbling grew that such schools, lacking a strong, common faith identity, were Catholic in name only. As a result, many Catholic parents felt there was little to be gained by paying Catholic-school tuition instead of just sending their children to the local public school.

Many of the schools were also sparsely enrolled, with halls and classrooms no longer busting at the seams. With less



income collected from tuition, considerable subsidies were needed from donors, parishes, and dioceses. In many cases, pastors and bishops began seeing their schools as burdens or outdated relics of the past. In this sense, the very people who should have been most enthusiastic about Catholic schools – the clergy and devout parents – had less and less incentive to save them.

As the 1990s unfolded, another factor began to accelerate Catholic schools' misfortunes: the emergence of charter schooling. Launched in Minnesota in 1991, charter schools were in many ways a godsend for urban America. For poor parents unable to afford private-school tuition or a home in a better school district, chartering at last offered improved educational options for their children.

One downside, however, was the further undermining of urban Catholic education. Even though Catholic schools set their tuition rates well below per-pupil costs (to remain accessible), a few thousand dollars a year was still prohibitively expensive for many inner-city families. Offered new, presumably safe, and tuition-free charter schools in their neighborhoods, many urban parents decided to forego the expense of Catholic schools. In the 1990s, almost 600 more schools were closed.

Today, by and large, the travails of Catholic education still do not register with the public or elected officials. In the first decade of this new century, more than 1,000 Catholic schools were shuttered; 174 Catholic schools closed or were consolidated during the 2009-10 school year alone. In the past ten years, the Archdiocese of Chicago has seen 31% of its students leave; the Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese

of Brooklyn have lost 26% and 33% of their students, respectively, in the same period. Indeed, just this January, the New York archdiocese – which serves about 2.5 million Catholics – announced that it would close 27 schools, about one-eighth of its total.

When these more recent figures are added to those of the past several decades, they paint a shocking portrait of decline. In 50 years, the number of Catholic schools has dropped by nearly 5,800, more than all the elementary public schools operating in the state of California. In the same period, Catholic schools lost more than 3 million students. Where Catholic schools once dominated the private-school sector, claiming nearly 90% of the market, they now represent only one in five non-public schools. And of those Catholic schools that remain, only one out of every eight is located in an inner city.

Why Catholic schools matter

Clearly, the events of the past half-century offer ample cause for concern for Catholics. But the decline of Catholic schools affects much more than one faith community. And some of those who should be most concerned have a thoroughly secular purpose: education reformers struggling to narrow the divide in academic achievement between wealthy students and poor students, and especially between white children and minorities in urban schools.

Over the years, a body of scholarly evidence has accumulated showing that Catholic schools have not only excellent academic results overall, but also a peculiar ability to help disadvantaged students. In the 1980s, the eminent sociologist James Coleman found that Catholic schools, more than



public schools, were generating similar achievement results among different types of students. A decade later, other researchers reported similar results, finding that Catholic schools were somehow able "simultaneously to achieve relatively high levels of student learning [and] distribute this learning more equitably with regard to race and class than in the public sector." And in more recent years, many other researchers – including Paul Peterson, Derek Neal, and Andrew Greeley – have continued to find Catholic-school benefits (especially for at-risk students), including higher test scores, improved high-school graduation rates, and higher rates of college attendance. Catholic schools, in other words, somehow manage to narrow the "achievement gap."

There are several explanations for this phenomenon. For instance, Anthony Bryk, Valerie Lee, and Peter Holland have argued that it stems from Catholic schools' rejection of the 20th-century trend toward making secondary schools more vocational, and their commitment to the classic college-preparatory curriculum. Still others argue that neither curriculum nor pedagogy is the principal reason Catholic schools achieve remarkable success with disadvantaged children. Rather, they note, it is because these schools are staffed by adults who believe unquestioningly that all children can and must learn, regardless of income, status, or race. Equally important is these adults' sense of responsibility and their determination to improve the lives of their students. The "soft bigotry of low expectations," prevalent in many troubled urban schools, has no place in Catholic education.

Of course, many aging Baby Boomers who attended parochial schools might point to another of Catholic schooling's distinctive

features. They likely recall memorization, recitation, a tightly ordered school day, lectures on diligence, and, most of all, discipline. Indeed, few would likely describe their childhood schools as the idealized learning environment embraced by today's progressive educators, where instruction is "student centered," where children can "explore," and where routine and repetition are abjured.

Interestingly, today's extraordinarily high-performing urban charter schools – arguably the greatest story in public education in a generation – bear a curious resemblance to the Catholic schools of Baby Boomer memory. Though they have no crucifixes on the walls and any form of corporal punishment is strictly forbidden, outstanding inner-city charters – like those in the Knowledge Is Power Program, Achievement First, and Uncommon Schools networks – believe deeply in order. They also assign mountains of homework, set high expectations, and pursue academic achievement for all students, regardless of background, with a secular religious zeal.

Though the principals of these schools might explain their tactics more elegantly than would the nuns of the 1960s, they are in the exact same business. They need to teach their disadvantaged students reading and math, but they also need to teach them essential life skills that could help lift them out of poverty – skills like hard work, determination, and personal discipline.

It is not an overstatement to say that America's future success will be determined by whether this same kind of education remains available to poor children and families in our inner cities. Over the past 40 years, the failures of so many urban public schools have prevented millions of poor



African-American and Latino children from fully realizing the American Dream. And even as we watch in wonder as high-performing urban charter schools send increasing numbers of low-income minority students to college, it is hard not to be discouraged by the many more who remain trapped in schools that simply do not work, left to wander through the same opportunity void as their parents before them.

But with millions of Catholics today firmly rooted in the middle class and above, it's also easy to forget that 50, 75, and 100 years ago, America's urban poor were often recent Catholic immigrants facing many of the same obstacles as today's impoverished inner-city families. Given that a huge proportion of these children attended parochial schools, it's not unreasonable to wonder whether Catholic education played a decisive role in the upward mobility of broad swaths of the American public – and whether that achievement can be repeated with poor students today.

Obstacles to reform

If Catholic education is to lift future generations of Americans out of poverty, however, it must overcome two major and immediate obstacles. The first is of Catholic schools' own making: slowness to change and resistance to reform. For years, conservatives properly accused traditional urban school systems of being stubbornly resistant to change, but recent years have seen far more innovation in urban public education than in urban Catholic education. Programs like Teach for America and New Leaders for New Schools have introduced a new generation of talented educators into inner-city public schools. Improved data and accountability systems have made school performance more transparent and forced

interventions on the worst schools. And vigorous non-profit organizations exist to replicate great schools, overhaul the teaching profession, and work through the political process to lobby for reform.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about urban Catholic education. Catholic schools are still bound to the same staid organizational framework developed generations ago. These systems are typically led by aging career Catholic educators lacking significant experience in any other field. Schools seldom have coherent content standards, accountability systems based on assessments of student academic growth, or an ethic of making publicly available the performance data that do exist.

True, there are a number of promising reform stories. Under the dynamic leadership of superintendent Mary McDonald, the Diocese of Memphis, for instance, was able to re-open a handful of long-shuttered schools in some of the city's most impoverished neighborhoods. These "Jubilee Schools" received generous support from private benefactors and are now generating remarkable gains in student achievement, thanks to a combination of old-fashioned high expectations and a modern focus on measurable results.

In 22 urban centers across the country, the Cristo Rey network of Catholic high schools is consistently preparing underserved inner-city students for college. But what makes these schools stand out is their innovative approach to income and expenses. The central Cristo Rey office provides member schools with a range of support services, taking advantage of economies of scale. The schools have also forged helpful relationships with local businesses to produce the distinctive feature of a Cristo



Rey education: One day a week, each student works for a nearby employer, such as a law firm or bank. The income generated helps offset the cost of the student's education, and the real-world work experience is of enormous value to the students when they apply to college and pursue careers.

At the University of Notre Dame, the Alliance for Catholic Education program trains recent college graduates to become teachers and principals in needy Catholic schools across the nation. Like a Catholic version of Teach for America, ACE places talented young adults in under-resourced schools, particularly in the South; the program also encourages new teachers to become involved in the churches and communities surrounding their schools. ACE thus injects high-energy human capital into distressed communities even as it develops the next generation of Catholic-school leaders. Because of ACE's success, a number of other Catholic colleges and universities have launched similar programs.

Unfortunately, while these efforts show a great deal of potential, their scope is dwarfed by the magnitude of the crisis in Catholic education. Opening a few schools in downtown Memphis can't compensate for the staggering losses of the last decade – like the 65 schools shuttered in Detroit, or the 64 that closed in Chicago, or the 53 that disappeared from Newark. The footprint of Catholic-school networks like Cristo Rey is tiny compared to those operating in the charter sector, and the human-capital contributions of ACE and its affiliated programs are still a fraction of Teach for America's.

And even if urban Catholic schools were to overhaul their personnel and organizational

structures and re-invigorate their advocacy apparatus, they would still need to address the same questions that have dogged them for the last two generations: How can schools with increasing costs survive when they serve predominantly low-income students, and when they rely exclusively on tuition and private contributions for income? Without a reliable stream of funding that is commensurate with expenses, insurmountable deficits will inevitably accumulate. Isn't this basic financial model, quite simply, irreparably broken?

The second key obstacle – one that will likely prove more difficult to resolve – is the exclusion of Catholic schools from government funding. Some of the lowest-performing urban public-school systems are also those that spend the most money per pupil – but despite Catholic schools' record of helping disadvantaged students learn, and despite their desperate need for financial resources, these institutions are denied any direct public support.

Much of the unease about government support for faith-based schools is rooted in the concern that their highest priority is religious proselytization. What has failed to permeate the debate, however, is that while Catholic schools originally developed to serve and protect Catholic children and to advance the faith, many inner-city Catholic schools now serve predominantly *non-Catholic*, poor, minority students.

The Archdiocese of New York, for example, reported in 2008 that, among its inner-city schools, nearly two-thirds of students lived below the poverty line and more than 90% were racial minorities. In Washington, D.C., as of 2007, more than 70% of students attending the lowest-income Catholic schools were non-Catholic. In Memphis's



inner-city "Jubilee" Catholic schools, as of 2008, 96% of students lived below the poverty line and 81% were non-Catholic. In fact, over the past 40 years, the portion of minority students in Catholic schools overall increased by 250%, and the share of non-Catholic students increased by 500%.

Many of the people associated with these schools will explain that they are motivated not by an obligation to evangelize but by a desire to fulfill their faith's longstanding commitment to service. Among them, an unofficial creed has slowly emerged: "We don't serve these students because *they* are Catholic, we serve them because *we* are Catholic." Regardless of one's position on public support for religiously affiliated entities, it is difficult not to acknowledge that these schools are fully engaged in the noble vocation of public service, civil rights, and social justice. The challenge now is to clear the way for public support of that vocation – and one promising policy innovation may provide the solution.

Religious charters

Those gathered in Washington on that morning in 2007 to learn of the fate of the consortium schools thought they knew what would come next. A bishop's reluctant concession that a number of urban schools had become financially unsustainable was always followed by an announcement of closures. The only questions left were "How many?" and "When?" But Archbishop Wuerl offered a twist, a novel ending for this all-too-familiar story line. The troubled schools would not close: Instead, they would convert into secular public charter schools.

Depending on whom one asked, this unexpected decision was sensible, tragic, heartening, maddening, or all of the above.

To the archdiocese, it was merely the best among several unpleasant options. On the positive side, the schools would stay open: They would remain in their current locations; the students and teachers were welcome to return; and, best of all, because they would be fully public, the schools would receive more than \$10,000 in government aid per student. But the cost of conversion was high: Becoming charters meant the wholesale loss of the schools' religious character. They would be forced to expunge all faith-based elements. No more prayers, no more Bible studies, no more statues of saints, no more crucifixes on the walls.

To those who believe that the teaching of the Catholic catechism in school is essential, or that faith is an indispensable component of a proper education, all that mattered was that these schools would become secular. Charter conversion was the equivalent of closure. For others, however, the issue is more complicated. In some eyes, what truly defines an urban Catholic education is the combination of lofty expectations, universal values, academic rigor, personal discipline, and service to the needy. If all of these elements were preserved in the Washington schools, maybe the loss of faith wasn't a deal-breaker. This difference of opinion raises a straightforward but profound question: How important is the Catholic in Catholic education?

America's outstanding urban charter schools shed light on the subject in a way both vexing and encouraging to Catholic education's biggest champions. These superb secular schools have clearly demonstrated that religion is not a necessary condition for success. But anyone who walks into one of these high-poverty, high-performing charters will quickly notice the all-but-religious



devotion of the adults in the building. These teachers and administrators are motivated, and sustained in the face of adversity, by a deep commitment to justice and opportunity. This commitment leads them to believe that all children can learn; it manifests itself in longer school years and mandatory Saturday classes; it is proclaimed in mottos like "Work hard. Be nice," "Team and family," and "No shortcuts and no excuses." Take away the ideals and personal convictions motivating the founders and employees of these schools, and it's easy to see how mediocrity would move in. It stands to reason, then, that removing Catholicism – the shared inspirational force driving those who work in Catholic schools – would have a detrimental influence on the schools' performance.

To their credit, those who led the charter conversion process in Washington, D.C., not only foresaw this challenge but were thoughtful in addressing it. Rather than simply removing faith-based elements, they sought to replace them with secularized versions that would serve similar purposes. In the converted schools, students no longer pray together at the start of the day, but they do convene for a school-wide morning gathering. They no longer read from the Bible, but they do have an honor code. They no longer recite the Ten Commandments, but they do have ten "core values." Understanding that religion supported the schools' academic and cultural structure, those managing the transition ensured that new pillars were in place when the schools re-opened in the fall. And after two years, test scores show that the converted schools are holding their own, if not yet excelling.

Thus the Washington charters offer encouraging news for those concerned primarily with ensuring that inner-city

children have viable alternatives to failing public schools. But the people who consider faith formation to be one of the most important parts of a child's education would surely want to see some restoration of the religious elements they cherished in their Catholic schools.

Which raises a question: Why is it not possible to have both? Must a Catholic K-12 school be required to forsake its faith when it converts to charter status? Is foregoing government aid a necessary, non-negotiable consequence of a school's retention of its religion?

Though currently the official legal answer to these questions is an unqualified "yes," it is becoming less emphatic over time. And with the right political, legislative, and legal strategies, advocates could push it to "no, not always."

Other popular education programs have put the age-old policy of banning state aid to religious K-12 schools on increasingly shaky ground. For decades, former members of the armed services have been allowed to use their G.I. benefits at faith-based institutions of higher education. And low-income college students have long been permitted to use federal Pell Grants at religious colleges and universities. These policies were built on two premises: First, religious schools are a part of an expansive, diverse higher-education landscape, and second, individual recipients – not Uncle Sam – direct the dollars to particular schools. The government can't be accused of advancing a religion because its funds equally support public colleges and private colleges of all stripes.

These principles were finally applied to K-12 schooling in the 2002 Supreme Court



case *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, which found Ohio's K-12 voucher program to be constitutional. The majority ruled that since the vouchers advance a legitimate secular purpose (educating disadvantaged students), may be used at any private school (secular or religious), and support religious institutions only through individual choice, the program does not offend the establishment clause.

With this decision, the Court unintentionally adumbrated how a state might craft constitutionally acceptable legislation that allows for religious charter schools. First, the schools would have to follow all of the rules of other charter schools, such as administering state assessments and maintaining open-enrollment policies. Second, schools run by all faith traditions (in addition to non-religious organizations) would need to be allowed to participate. Third, the state would have to use "student-based funding" – meaning that each child would be allocated a certain amount of government aid for his education, and that that funding would follow the student to the school of his choice. The law would have a clear secular purpose – preserving high-quality education options for needy students. All participating schools would be held to the same academic, safety, and financial standards. The array of schools available to families would be diverse, including government-run public, non-profit-run public, secular private, and various faith-based private institutions. If any money should go to a religious school, it would be the result of choices made by families, not the state.

But before any such legislation is enacted – and before any case surrounding it finds its way to the Supreme Court – a great deal of coordinated work must take place. First,

Catholic-school advocates need to show that Catholic schools are willing to be an integrated part of the larger K-12 environment. They need to signal to private-school skeptics that Catholic schools are willing to participate in a system of standards, assessments, accountability, and transparency.

Second, savvy state legislators need to craft a multi-pronged strategy to lay the necessary policy groundwork. This would include, among other things, changing states' charter laws to allow the participation of private schools, developing a student-based funding formula for education, and establishing clear rules for ensuring that new Catholic (and other private) charter schools are able to maintain sufficient autonomy while being held accountable for results.

Finally, to ensure that these schools can serve poor students well, the federal government would need to change its rules barring private schools from directly receiving federal education funds – such as Title I dollars for low-income students – and from participating in the federal charter-school program. The federal government needn't apply these changes to all private schools; it could extend these waivers only to those private schools willing to accept the public accountability bargain of charters. Congress could be particularly helpful by launching a small incentive program that would fund several cities or states interested in pursuing such faith-based charter schools.

It is long past time for policymakers to fix the legal peculiarities that currently prevent the establishment of religious charter schools. Through a voucher program, a private school can legally receive government aid and keep its religious aspects while avoiding the state's



accountability system. A religious charter-school system would serve the same educational and spiritual needs in America's inner cities – and it would have the added benefit of holding the schools accountable for their results. Yet today such a program would be illegal. Until that changes, hundreds of Catholic schools serving some of the nation's poorest students – schools that could be kept alive as religious charters – will be needlessly lost.

Evolution not revolution

There are reasons for optimism on this front. In his 2007 book, *[Religious Charter Schools: Legalities and Practicalities](#)*, scholar Lawrence Weinberg explains how faith-based organizations can make use of the chartering mechanism within current laws (by "accommodating" religion, not "endorsing" it), and gives examples of schools across the nation that seem to be testing the legal boundaries. Moreover, there are today numerous Hebrew-language charter schools serving mostly Jewish student bodies, as well as charters with strong Arabic-language programs serving majority Muslim populations. Increasingly, the line between "religious private" and "secular charter" is blurring.

Intellectually, the case can be made for faith-based charter schools. Crafted wisely by state political leaders, legislation may pass constitutional muster. And on the ground, educational entrepreneurs – like those starting Hebrew-language charters or secular charters with voluntary after-school religious programs – are already showing that great interest exists among providers and consumers.

What is needed now, then, is for a big-city Catholic bishop to acknowledge that

chartering and Catholic education are a natural fit. For generations, Catholic schools educated countless poor children; chartering was created to allow a wide variety of non-profit groups to run excellent schools, frequently serving children in need. By allowing Catholic schools to receive government funding, a religious-charter policy could honor the traditions of both Catholic education and the chartering movement, allow these schools to carry on their service to the most at-risk urban students, and adhere to state standards, assessments, and accountability frameworks.

This faith-based charter compromise could lead to a renewed urban school system – one based on equitable funding, more diverse options, parental choice, and comprehensive transparency and accountability. It is also probably the most practical way to rescue an institution that has played an enormous role in America's history, and that continues to help millions of children achieve the American Dream.

Implementing such a policy will not be without its political and legal challenges, of course. But far less appealing is the alternative: an acceleration of the tragic decline of urban Catholic schools, and the eventual regret that we did nothing over half a century while one of the nation's greatest educational treasures disappeared.

Andy Smarick
Catholic Education Resource Center
2011

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Your So-Called Education

COMMENCEMENT is a special time on college campuses: an occasion for students, families, faculty and administrators to come together to celebrate a job well done. And perhaps there is reason to be pleased. In recent surveys of college seniors, more than 90 percent report gaining subject-specific knowledge and developing the ability to think critically and analytically. Almost 9 out of 10 report that overall, they were satisfied with their collegiate experiences.

We would be happy to join in the celebrations if it weren't for our recent research, which raises doubts about the quality of undergraduate learning in the United States. Over four years, we followed the progress of several thousand students in more than two dozen diverse four-year colleges and universities. We found that large numbers of the students were making their way through college with minimal exposure to rigorous coursework, only a modest investment of effort and little or no meaningful improvement in skills like writing and reasoning.

In a typical semester, for instance, 32 percent of the students did not take a single course with more than 40 pages of reading per week, and 50 percent did not take any course requiring more than 20 pages of writing over the semester. The average student spent only about 12 to 13 hours per week studying — about half the time a full-time college student in 1960 spent studying, according to the labor economists Philip S. Babcock and Mindy S. Marks.

Not surprisingly, a large number of the students showed no significant progress on tests of critical thinking, complex reasoning and writing that were administered when

they began college and then again at the ends of their sophomore and senior years. If the test that we used, the Collegiate Learning Assessment, were scaled on a traditional 0-to-100 point range, 45 percent of the students would not have demonstrated gains of even one point over the first two years of college, and 36 percent would not have shown such gains over four years of college.

Why is the overall quality of undergraduate learning so poor?

While some colleges are starved for resources, for many others it's not for lack of money. Even at those colleges where for the past several decades tuition has far outpaced the rate of inflation, students are taught by fewer full-time tenured faculty members while being looked after by a greatly expanded number of counselors who serve an array of social and personal needs. At the same time, many schools are investing in deluxe dormitory rooms, elaborate student centers and expensive gyms. Simply put: academic investments are a lower priority.

The situation reflects a larger cultural change in the relationship between students and colleges. The authority of educators has diminished, and students are increasingly thought of, by themselves and their colleges, as "clients" or "consumers." When 18-year-olds are emboldened to see themselves in this manner, many look for ways to attain an educational credential effortlessly and comfortably. And they are catered to accordingly. The customer is always right.

Federal legislation has facilitated this shift. The funds from Pell Grants and subsidized



loans, by being assigned to students to spend on academic institutions they have chosen rather than being packaged as institutional grants for colleges to dispense, have empowered students — for good but also for ill. And expanded privacy protections have created obstacles for colleges in providing information on student performance to parents, undercutting a traditional check on student lassitude.

Fortunately, there are some relatively simple, practical steps that colleges and universities could take to address the problem. Too many institutions, for instance, rely primarily on student course evaluations to assess teaching. This creates perverse incentives for professors to demand little and give out good grades. (Indeed, the 36 percent of students in our study who reported spending five or fewer hours per week studying alone still had an average G.P.A. of 3.16.) On those commendable occasions when professors and academic departments do maintain rigor, they risk declines in student enrollments. And since resources are typically distributed based on enrollments, rigorous classes are likely to be canceled and rigorous programs shrunk. Distributing resources and rewards based on student learning instead of student satisfaction would help stop this race to the bottom.

Others involved in education can help, too. College trustees, instead of worrying primarily about institutional rankings and fiscal concerns, could hold administrators accountable for assessing and improving learning. Alumni as well as parents and students on college tours could ignore institutional facades and focus on educational substance. And the Department of Education could make available nationally representative longitudinal data

on undergraduate learning outcomes for research purposes, as it has been doing for decades for primary and secondary education.

Most of all, we hope that during this commencement season, our faculty colleagues will pause to consider the state of undergraduate learning and our collective responsibility to increase academic rigor on our campuses.

Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa
New York Times
May 14, 2011

Richard Arum, a professor of sociology and education at New York University, and Josipa Roksa, an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Virginia, are the authors of “Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses.”



Hindu Militants Storm Catholic School, Demand Enrollment for Children

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — About 50 Hindu extremists burst into a Catholic school in southern India, demanding enrollment for two children, the Vatican missionary news agency Fides reported. The episode underscored the "schizophrenia" of Hindu radicals in India, who attack Christians yet recognize the excellent education provided by church-run schools, a local source told Fides July 7. The incident occurred in Belgaum in southwestern India, at St. Joseph's Convent School run by Canossian

Sisters. The extremists forcibly entered the school premises and threatened and mistreated the sisters and some of the teachers, Fides said. The sisters called the police, who were able to calm the situation. Guiding the group was a man claiming to be a leading member of a nationalist Hindu party, the Bharatiya Janata Party. He demanded the enrollment of a friend's two children.

July 7, 2011



New York Archdiocese Criticizes Sex-Ed Mandate

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York called a new city requirement that sex education be taught at all public middle and high schools “troubling” on Wednesday, and some Catholic officials said they would advise Catholic parents not to let their children participate.

In the first serious challenge to the city’s mandate, which was announced on Tuesday, a spokesman for the archdiocese said the church’s position was that parents, not the schools, should educate children about sex. “Parents have the right and the responsibility to be the first and primary educators of their children,” Joseph Zwilling, director of communications for the archdiocese, wrote in a statement. “This mandate by the city usurps that role, and allows the public school system to substitute its beliefs and values for those of the parents.”

The sex-education curriculum — packages of lesson plans titled HealthSmart and Reducing the Risk — describes abstinence as the best method to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. It includes lessons on how to use a condom and discussions about the appropriate age for sexual activity.

The lesson plans have been recommended by the city for several years, and are already used in many schools.

Until now, principals have chosen what, if anything, is taught about sexuality. The city will now require that all students take a semester of sex education in middle school and again in high school. For schools that do not have a program in place, the city will recommend that its program be taught.

Edward Mechmann, a lawyer for the archdiocese, said he objected to the “overall lesson” of the city’s program, “that abstinence is a nice ideal.”

Mr. Mechmann said he would encourage parents to exercise an opt-out clause and exclude their children from lessons about contraception. “I’d also insist that parents inspect the materials to make sure there’s nothing really offensive or inaccurate being put in there,” he said. “We don’t say that about cigarettes,” he added. “We don’t say, here’s a filtered cigarette — it’s better than Camel.”

Nicholas A. DiMarzio, the bishop of Brooklyn, said he planned to work with Catholic parents across the city to “assert their parent rights on this issue.” Some public schools that rent space from the church could have to find new locations in which to teach the required courses.

But as parents and members of community groups and religious organizations began to digest news about the new sex-education program on Wednesday, there were few other objections.

Souleimane Konaté, an imam who is the head of the Masjid Aqsa mosque in Harlem, said he was in favor of the requirement. “I think it’s a good idea,” he said. “I do talk about it sometimes, but people look at me like I’m crazy because the imams aren’t supposed to talk about it. It’s taboo in my community. But if somebody is doing it for me, I would support them 100 percent.”

Several parents said that teenage pregnancy rates and the number of young people with H.I.V. had made it difficult to oppose the



requirement on moral grounds. Vanessa Mercado, the after-school program manager at the Inwood Academy for Leadership charter school, said that when she attended Catholic school, she never had a sex-education class. Things should be different for her daughter, Ms. Mercado said. “Children are exposed to sex in so many forms now that it’s better they get the right information from someone,” she said.

Tesa Wilson, a member of the Community Education Council for District 14 in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, said she thought the new policy was “right-on,” although she acknowledged that in her neighborhood, where many families are observant, her view might not be widespread.

One possible reason for lowered temperatures around the topic of sex education is that many New Yorkers once sat through health classes that were, in many ways, more explicit. In 1981, when Ms. Wilson was a junior, sex education was taught, and the school would help students obtain birth control and counseling if they asked, she said.

Janet Heller, principal of Middle School 324, recalled a previous curriculum, titled Family Living Including Sex Education, which the Board of Education mandated in 1986. It covered many of the same topics

that the city’s current curriculum does, and it placed a heavy emphasis on abstinence, Ms. Heller said. Nonetheless, it was controversial.

“At the time it was new, it was, ‘Oh my God, they’re going to be talking about condoms,’ ” she said. “But now it’s old hat; they have condoms next to candy in the drugstores.”

Throughout the 1990s, parents in a school district in western Queens repeatedly made headlines for banning the words contraception, abortion, homosexuality and masturbation from their schools’ health classes. Under mayoral control, school boards no longer have the authority to issue such orders, but some parents in District 24 still feel that sex education is not the province of public schools.

“I don’t agree with it, because I think parents should teach their children at their own discretion,” said Lucy Accardo, the mother of four children and a member of the Community Education Council for District 24.

Anna M. Phillips
New York Times
August 10, 2011



Years of Liberal Dogma Have Spawned a Generation of Amoral, Uneducated, Welfare Dependent, Brutalised Youngsters

A few weeks after the U.S. city of Detroit was ravaged by 1967 race riots in which 43 people died, I was shown around the wrecked areas by a black reporter named Joe Strickland.

He said: ‘Don’t you believe all that stuff people here are giving media folk about how sorry they are about what happened. When they talk to each other, they say: “It was a great fire, man!”’

I am sure that is what many of the young rioters, black and white, who have burned and looted in England through the past few shocking nights think today.

It was fun. It made life interesting. It got people to notice them. As a girl looter told a BBC reporter, it showed ‘the rich’ and the police that ‘we can do what we like.’

If you live a normal life of absolute futility, which we can assume most of this week’s rioters do, excitement of any kind is welcome. The people who wrecked swathes of property, burned vehicles and terrorised communities have no moral compass to make them susceptible to guilt or shame.

Most have no jobs to go to or exams they might pass. They know no family role models, for most live in homes in which the father is unemployed, or from which he has decamped.

They are illiterate and innumerate, beyond maybe some dexterity with computer games and BlackBerries.

They are essentially wild beasts. I use that phrase advisedly, because it seems appropriate to young people bereft of the discipline that might make them employable; of the conscience that distinguishes between right and wrong.

They respond only to instinctive animal impulses — to eat and drink, have sex, seize or destroy the accessible property of others.

Their behaviour on the streets resembled that of the polar bear which attacked a Norwegian tourist camp last week. They were doing what came naturally and, unlike the bear, no one even shot them for it.

A former London police chief spoke a few years ago about the ‘feral children’ on his patch — another way of describing the same reality.

The depressing truth is that at the bottom of our society is a layer of young people with no skills, education, values or aspirations. They do not have what most of us would call ‘lives’: they simply exist.

Nobody has ever dared suggest to them that they need feel any allegiance to anything, least of all Britain or their community. They do not watch royal weddings or notice Test matches or take pride in being Londoners or Scousers or Brummies.

Not only do they know nothing of Britain’s past, they care nothing for its present.

They have their being only in video games and street-fights, casual drug use and crime, sometimes petty, sometimes serious.



The notions of doing a nine-to-five job, marrying and sticking with a wife and kids, taking up DIY or learning to read properly, are beyond their imaginations.

Last week, I met a charity worker who is trying to help a teenage girl in East London to get a life for herself. There is a difficulty, however: 'Her mother wants her to go on the game.' My friend explained: 'It's the money, you know.'

An underclass has existed throughout history, which once endured appalling privation. Its spasmodic outbreaks of violence, especially in the early 19th century, frightened the ruling classes.

Its frustrations and passions were kept at bay by force and draconian legal sanctions, foremost among them capital punishment and transportation to the colonies.

Today, those at the bottom of society behave no better than their forebears, but the welfare state has relieved them from hunger and real want.

When social surveys speak of 'deprivation' and 'poverty', this is entirely relative. Meanwhile, sanctions for wrongdoing have largely vanished.

When Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith recently urged employers to take on more British workers and fewer migrants, he was greeted with a hoarse laugh.

Every firm in the land knows that an East European — for instance — will, first, bother to turn up; second, work harder; and third, be better-educated than his or her British counterpart. Whom do we blame for this state of affairs?

Ken Livingstone, contemptible as ever, declares the riots to be a result of the Government's spending cuts. This recalls the remarks of the then leader of Lambeth Council, 'Red Ted' Knight, who said after the 1981 Brixton riots that the police in his borough 'amounted to an army of occupation'.

But it will not do for a moment to claim the rioters' behaviour reflects deprived circumstances or police persecution.

Of course it is true that few have jobs, learn anything useful at school, live in decent homes, eat meals at regular hours or feel loyalty to anything beyond their local gang.

This is not, however, because they are victims of mistreatment or neglect.

It is because it is fantastically hard to help such people, young or old, without imposing a measure of compulsion which modern society finds unacceptable. These kids are what they are because nobody makes them be anything different or better.

A key factor in delinquency is lack of effective sanctions to deter it. From an early stage, feral children discover that they can bully fellow pupils at school, shout abuse at people in the streets, urinate outside pubs, hurl litter from car windows, play car radios at deafening volumes, and, indeed, commit casual assaults with only a negligible prospect of facing rebuke, far less retribution.

John Stuart Mill wrote in his great 1859 essay *On Liberty*: 'The liberty of the individual must be thus far limited; he must not make himself a nuisance to other people.'



Yet every day up and down the land, this vital principle of civilised societies is breached with impunity.

Anyone who reproaches a child, far less an adult, for discarding rubbish, making a racket, committing vandalism or driving unsociably will receive in return a torrent of obscenities, if not violence.

So who is to blame? The breakdown of families, the pernicious promotion of single motherhood as a desirable state, the decline of domestic life so that even shared meals are a rarity, have all contributed importantly to the condition of the young underclass.

The social engineering industry unites to claim that the conventional template of family life is no longer valid.

And what of the schools? I do not think they can be blamed for the creation of a grotesquely self-indulgent, non-judgmental culture.

This has ultimately been sanctioned by Parliament, which refuses to accept, for instance, that children are more likely to prosper with two parents than with one, and that the dependency culture is a tragedy for those who receive something for nothing.

The judiciary colludes with social services and infinitely ingenious lawyers to assert the primacy of the rights of the criminal and aggressor over those of law-abiding citizens, especially if a young offender is involved.

The police, in recent years, have developed a reputation for ignoring yobbery and bullying, or even for taking the jobs' side against complainants.

'The problem,' said Bill Pitt, the former head of Manchester's Nuisance Strategy Unit, 'is that the law appears to be there to protect the rights of the perpetrator, and does not support the victim.'

Police regularly arrest householders who are deemed to have taken 'disproportionate' action to protect themselves and their property from burglars or intruders. The message goes out that criminals have little to fear from 'the feds'.

Figures published earlier this month show that a majority of 'lesser' crimes — which include burglary and car theft, and which cause acute distress to their victims — are never investigated, because forces think it so unlikely they will catch the perpetrators.

How do you inculcate values in a child whose only role model is footballer Wayne Rooney — a man who is bereft of the most meagre human graces?

How do you persuade children to renounce bad language when they hear little else from stars on the BBC?

A teacher, Francis Gilbert, wrote five years ago in his book *Yob Nation*: 'The public feels it no longer has the right to interfere.'

Discussing the difficulties of imposing sanctions for misbehaviour or idleness at school, he described the case of a girl pupil he scolded for missing all her homework deadlines.

The youngster's mother, a social worker, telephoned him and said: 'Threatening to throw my daughter off the A-level course because she hasn't done some work is tantamount to psychological abuse, and



there is legislation which prevents these sorts of threats.

‘I believe you are trying to harm my child’s mental well-being, and may well take steps . . . if you are not careful.’

That story rings horribly true. It reflects a society in which teachers have been deprived of their traditional right to arbitrate pupils’ behaviour. Denied power, most find it hard to sustain respect, never mind control.

I never enjoyed school, but, like most children until very recent times, did the work because I knew I would be punished if I did not. It would never have occurred to my parents not to uphold my teachers’ authority. This might have been unfair to some pupils, but it was the way schools functioned for centuries, until the advent of crazy ‘pupil rights’.

I recently received a letter from a teacher who worked in a county’s pupil referral unit, describing appalling difficulties in enforcing discipline. Her only weapon, she said, was the right to mark a disciplinary cross against a child’s name for misbehaviour.

Having repeatedly and vainly asked a 15-year-old to stop using obscene language, she said: ‘Fred, if you use language like that again, I’ll give you a cross.’

He replied: ‘Give me an effing cross, then!’ Eventually, she said: ‘Fred, you have three crosses now. You must miss your next break.’

He answered: ‘I’m not missing my break, I’m going for an effing fag!’ When she appealed to her manager, he said: ‘Well, the

boy’s got a lot going on at home at the moment. Don’t be too hard on him.’

This is a story repeated daily in schools up and down the land.

A century ago, no child would have dared to use obscene language in class. Today, some use little else. It symbolises their contempt for manners and decency, and is often a foretaste of delinquency.

If a child lacks sufficient respect to address authority figures politely, and faces no penalty for failing to do so, then other forms of abuse — of property and person — come naturally.

So there we have it: a large, amoral, brutalised sub-culture of young British people who lack education because they have no will to learn, and skills which might make them employable. They are too idle to accept work waitressing or doing domestic labour, which is why almost all such jobs are filled by immigrants.

They have no code of values to dissuade them from behaving anti-socially or, indeed, criminally, and small chance of being punished if they do so.

They have no sense of responsibility for themselves, far less towards others, and look to no future beyond the next meal, sexual encounter or TV football game.

They are an absolute deadweight upon society, because they contribute nothing yet cost the taxpayer billions. Liberal opinion holds they are victims, because society has failed to provide them with opportunities to develop their potential.



Most of us would say this is nonsense. Rather, they are victims of a perverted social ethos, which elevates personal freedom to an absolute, and denies the underclass the discipline — tough love — which alone might enable some of its members to escape from the swamp of dependency in which they live.

Only education — together with politicians, judges, policemen and teachers with the courage to force feral humans to obey rules the rest of us have accepted all our lives — can provide a way forward and a way out for these people.

They are products of a culture which gives them so much unconditionally that they are let off learning how to become human

beings. My dogs are better behaved and subscribe to a higher code of values than the young rioters of Tottenham, Hackney, Clapham and Birmingham.

Unless or until those who run Britain introduce incentives for decency and impose penalties for bestiality which are today entirely lacking, there will never be a shortage of young rioters and looters such as those of the past four nights, for whom their monstrous excesses were ‘a great fire, man’.

Max Hastings

Mail Online

10th August 2011



2011 Catholic Education Foundation Symposium DVDs Now Available!

The Catholic Education Foundation, committed to bringing Catholic high schools within the financial reach of the average Catholic and to strengthening the Catholic identity of our schools, is making available a set of DVDs from its biennial Educational Symposium, held at Cathedral High School in Manhattan on March 25, 2011.

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