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A Word from Our Editor

As an only child, I always looked forward to the onset of the school year; the enthusiasm for that time of year has never waned. The big difference this year, however, was that the summer which preceded it for me did not allow for any vacation whatsoever because demands from pastors, principals and teachers filled up the months of July and August. I am not complaining; in fact, I am delighted that our Catholic Education Foundation is becoming known as a reliable resource for the renewal of our Catholic schools. Our most important contribution in that regard is our Catholic School Identity Assessment: <http://catholiceducationfoundation.com/projects/csia>. By the time you read this issue of *The Catholic Educator*, all the high schools of the Diocese of Gaylord, Michigan, will have completed the first level of that assessment process. Congratulations to them, and may their tribe increase!

Effective our next issue, we shall include reader responses to TCE. Hence, read the current issue with an eye toward offering your reactions to the material presented here. This can be a vehicle for increased communication among us and shared wisdom.

I am writing this editorial with less than two months left to our presidential election. Because of the stark differences between the candidates, the outcome will have lasting consequences for our society and most especially for the Catholic Church and her institutions, particularly her schools. There are two words for “time” in Greek: *chronos* (the time clocking minutes and hours) and *chairoi* (the time to act). This election period is a *chairoi* for educating our Catholic people (and our students at every level) on the meaning of Catholic political

responsibility. We do not vote out of party loyalty or ethnic clanishness or tribalism; we vote on the basis of values and issues. From middle school through high school, every Catholic school student should be exposed to these principles in civics or social studies classes and have them reinforced in religion classes. The basics of such a course can be found in a recent reflection of Bishop Thomas Paprocki as he attempts to guide the faithful of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois.

Here are some of his more salient observations:

“. . . this whole discussion about God in the [Democratic] platform is a distraction from more disturbing matters that have been included in the platform. In 1992 Presidential candidate Bill Clinton famously said that abortion should be ‘safe, legal and rare.’ That was the party's official position until 2008. Apparently ‘rare’ is so last century that it had to be dropped, because now the Democratic Party Platform says that abortion should be ‘safe and legal.’ Moreover the Democratic Party Platform supports the right to abortion ‘regardless of the ability to pay.’ Well, there are only three ways for that to happen: either taxpayers will be required to fund abortion, or insurance companies will be required to pay for them (as they are now required to pay for contraception), or hospitals will be forced to perform them for free.

“Moreover, the Democratic Party Platform also supports same-sex marriage, recognizes that “gay rights are human rights,” and calls for the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act, the federal law signed by President Clinton in 1996 that defined



marriage as the legal union of one man and one woman

“Now, why am I mentioning these matters in the Democratic Party Platform? There are many positive and beneficial planks in the Democratic Party Platform, but I am pointing out those that explicitly endorse intrinsic evils. My job is not to tell you for whom you should vote. But I do have a duty to speak out on moral issues. I would be abdicating this duty if I remained silent out of fear of sounding ‘political’ and didn’t say anything about the morality of these issues. People of faith object to these platform positions that promote serious sins. I know that the Democratic Party’s official ‘unequivocal’ support for abortion is deeply troubling to pro-life Democrats.

“So what about the Republicans? I have read the Republican Party Platform and there is nothing in it that supports or promotes an intrinsic evil or a serious sin. The Republican Party Platform does say that courts ‘should have the option of imposing the death penalty in capital murder cases.’ But the Catechism of the Catholic Church says (in paragraph 2267), ‘Assuming that the guilty party’s identity and responsibility have been fully determined, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor. If, however, non-lethal means are sufficient to defend and protect people’s safety from the aggressor, authority will limit itself to such means, as these are more in keeping with the concrete conditions of the common good and more in conformity to the dignity of the human person. Today, in fact, as a consequence of the possibilities which the state has for effectively preventing crime, by rendering one who has committed an offense

incapable of doing harm — without definitely taking away from him the possibility of redeeming himself — the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity are very rare, if not practically nonexistent.’

“One might argue for different methods in the platform to address the needs of the poor, to feed the hungry and to solve the challenges of immigration, but these are prudential judgments about the most effective means of achieving morally desirable ends, not intrinsic evils.

“Certainly there are ‘pro-choice’ Republicans who support abortion rights and ‘Log Cabin Republicans’ who promote same-sex marriage, and they are equally as wrong as their Democratic counterparts. But these positions do not have the official support of their party.

“Again, I am not telling you which party or which candidates to vote for or against, but I am saying that you need to think and pray very carefully about your vote, because a vote for a candidate who promotes actions or behaviors that are intrinsically evil and gravely sinful makes you morally complicit and places the eternal salvation of your own soul in serious jeopardy.

“I pray that God will give you the wisdom and guidance to make the morally right choices.”

Perhaps the most important point in the Bishop’s column is the reminder (for some, this will come as news) that the way one votes can “make [one] morally complicit and place [one’s] eternal salvation in serious jeopardy.” That needs to be driven home to our students and, by extension, to their parents.



It was heartening to read that 63% of Catholics who attend Mass every Sunday express strong support for our bishops' opposition to the assaults on religious freedom by the Obama Administration; it was not surprising to learn that 63% of Catholics who do not attend Mass side with Barack Obama and his minions. The latter group belong to what Bishop René Gracida, retired Ordinary of Corpus Christi, refers to as "CINOS" (Catholics in Name Only). Needless to say, no one involved in Catholic education – administrators, faculty, parents

or students – should ever be able to classified in that way.

This is indeed a *chairos* — a teachable moment — may all Catholic educators use it to raise the consciousness of our school communities and to advance the Kingdom of God.

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



A Beacon of Light

The following is the text of remarks delivered by Kieffer Peralta of All Hallows High School in the Bronx, the student speaker at the Mass for High School Seniors celebrated by Cardinal Dolan at St. Patrick's Cathedral April 25.

Your Eminence and members of the Class of 2012:

"Pro Fide et Patria," which your Eminence knows means "For Faith and Country," has been the motto of All Hallows for 103 years. This phrase is currently instilled in the school's more than 660 young men. An All Hallows graduate, as well as all of the graduates of the Catholic high schools represented here this morning, must proclaim and be witnesses to our Catholic identity; to stand in solidarity with those marginalized by poverty and injustice; to pursue excellence in all our endeavors; and as men and women of God, demonstrate leadership skills.

All Hallows is just one of many schools here today that witness to the excellence of a Catholic education. That tradition can be seen in its fullness in this cathedral. I am personally a proud member of the 100th graduating class of All Hallows High School.

We are all here representing our respective schools. Yet we are bound in the same cause as graduating seniors, taking the next steps in our lives. We are about to embark on a new journey that is sure to be filled with its hurdles. We all know the world that awaits us. We live in a time when fear is prevalent and morals and values no longer hold the high ground. These next steps in our lives won't be easy but it is with great joy that I

say to you all, as brothers and sisters in Christ, that we seniors are well prepared to face what is beyond these doors.

With the upmost confidence I say that our Catholic education has prepared us for the future. Our education in love and faithfulness in Christ rivals no other. The value of what we have learned over the last four years is incomparable. Our Catholic education is similar to the "Valuable Pearl" mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew. What price tag can be put on an education that teaches us to embrace the poor and the sick, to feed the hungry and to stand up for the defenseless? In our classrooms we are taught to love and to be virtuous. We are taught to treat others with dignity, and to respect all human beings. A teacher may be able to teach us how to add and multiply but only Christ can teach us how to truly love. These essential elements that we have been taught are what allows me to say with confidence that we are prepared to be the next leaders of our future. These elements are what make our education unlike any other. This solid concrete foundation is what will sustain us as we go along the journey.

For more than 200 years our beloved Archdiocese has stood firm as a beacon of light to all of us in the role that she has played in our education and that of countless others. For that we owe a debt of gratitude. We also must not forget those who have accompanied us along our four-year journey. Our education would not be possible without the loving support of our parents, principals, teachers and, of course, you, Your Eminence.

Your Eminence, it is my honor on behalf of every graduating high school senior in the



Class of 2012 to express to you our sincerest thanks. We thank you for being the guardian of our faith and education.

Might I even add that this graduating class and you, Your Eminence, share a special relationship. Four years ago in the month of September, we enrolled as new freshmen. A few months later in April you were installed as the new Archbishop of New York. Together we were beginning a new phase in our lives. Four years have passed and we are now graduating seniors, and you, Your Eminence, a newly created Prince of the Church. We are your first four-year

graduating class and that, my brothers and sisters, is an honor. As we depart today humbly in service of Our Lord, let's call to mind that we are called to serve Christ in everything we do. Our futures may be bright but remain uncertain, but hold confidence in the fact that Christ will always be there.

I leave you with a quote from Blessed Pope John Paul II: "Do not be afraid. Do not be satisfied with mediocrity. Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

Thank you, and may God bless us all and the Class of 2012.



A Special Place for God

The following is the text of remarks delivered by Nicolas Camacho of Salesian High School in New Rochelle, the student speaker at the Mass for High School Seniors celebrated by Cardinal Dolan at St. Patrick's Cathedral April 26.

Your Eminence, Cardinal Dolan, and members of the Class of 2012,

Upon our entrance into the eighth grade about five years ago, we became leaders of our middle and elementary schools. We were looked on by the other kids as “big shot” leaders...And maybe we thought of ourselves that way, too! We were well known in our schools, as we were only a year away from entering high school. We were, essentially, the role models of our schools.

Many of us sitting here had the privilege of attending a Catholic elementary school. As graduates of our respective elementary schools, we were all apprehensive and excited for the next stage in our lives: high school. There, our talents were to be showcased, our skills honed, our maturity developed and our decisions to become more insightful. One thing is for certain: we were never alone and to this day we remain accompanied in this journey.

Four years of high school have come and gone, leaving indelible marks on us, spiritually, mentally and physically. These four years have made us who we are and who we will be. During these years, we began to find ourselves and our path in life. So far, we have learned both in and out of the classroom, we have competed in both

academic and athletic activities, and hopefully each of us has reserved a special place for God in his or her heart, a place that can only be filled by God and God alone.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks to us, saying, “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” We need Jesus in our lives, and the whole purpose of our Catholic school education has been to fix this conviction deep in our hearts.

During these years, we have grown in our morals and values, becoming the good Christians and honest citizens that both our parents and educators want us to be.

Embarking on our high school careers, we began a journey of reason, religion and love: a journey we could not make alone. Who would teach us what we had to know? Who would be there to support us in our moments of despair? Who would help us understand the mysteries of God and His creation? Surely, without our teachers, our educators in the faith, we would not be here today. First among those, are our parents, and I am sure there is not one of us here this morning not thanking God for the gift of his or her parents and the opportunity they gave us to have a quality, Catholic education... But then, there are also our teachers, and first among those is you, Your Eminence, as the chief teacher and pastor of the Archdiocese of New York. I was reflecting that this is the first time you join the seniors of our Catholic schools as New York's newest Cardinal. And in the name of all of us, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate you on this newest honor and to ask you to



continue to be a strong teacher of the Faith for us.

We are ready to take our place as future leaders in the Archdiocese and we look to you, Cardinal Dolan, for your love, support and wise teaching... And, this morning, we congratulate you and thank you for taking on this new dignity and responsibility.

As a student at Salesian High School in New Rochelle, St. John Bosco is for us our master teacher and it struck me, Your Eminence, that like Don Bosco you believe that "education is a matter of the heart." Your example teaches us to serve the community, learn from life's lessons and to help build pedestals for others to reach their

greatest potential. As members of the Class of 2012, we are ready to take on the challenge. We realize, Your Eminence, that with your guidance and support and the guidance and support of our families and educators, we are tomorrow's leaders.

The decisions we make are impacting the lives of many, and this morning, Your Eminence, we want to assure you, as the Archdiocese's newest graduates, that with the foundation of our Catholic education and with God's help, we will be witnesses of the Good News and ambassadors of Christ in our actions, words and manner of living. We are the men and women of the Class of 2012.



How Catholic Is Your Child's School?

Catholic Education Foundation develops tool to help administrators, pastors and parents determine the 'Catholic' identity of their school.

How Catholic is your child's school?

There's a new tool available to help parents answer that question.

The Catholic Identity Assessment program has been developed by the Rochester, N.Y.-based [Catholic Education Foundation](#). Father Peter Stravinskis, executive director of the foundation, said that a school's Catholic identity is not as assured as it was in an earlier time, when much of the faculty was composed of priests and religious. Father Stravinskis said that a number of individual schools and the Archdiocese of Denver and the Diocese of Gaylord in Michigan have adopted the Catholic Identity Assessment for all diocesan schools.

Charles Taylor, superintendent of Catholic schools in Gaylord, said that what attracted him to the assessment was that it has objective standards. "Somebody had finally sat down and formulated objective criteria for evaluating Catholic identity," he said. The 2011-2012 school year was the first time schools in Taylor's diocese used the assessment. They are awaiting the results.

The Catholic Identity Assessment, originally developed for Catholic high schools, is now available for elementary schools.

The process starts with a questionnaire. "It's designed as a self-assessment instrument, so that every member of the staff, from the principal to the custodial staff, participates in this survey," said Father Stravinskis. The questions deal with such issues as how

frequently the Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered, whether there are theology classes and the qualifications of those who teach these classes. There are also questions about how justice and charity are promoted.

There are three tiers: self-assessment, collated by the Catholic Education Foundation; self-assessment plus an on-site visit by a CEF team; and a second visit by the team.

One satisfied customer is Father Christopher Phillips, pastor of Our Lady of the Atonement Catholic Church in San Antonio. Father Phillips helped establish The Atonement Academy in 1994. The academy offers classes from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade and promotes, according to its website, "spiritual virtues through a challenging course of classical and Catholic education."

"As a Catholic school, those of us in the administration found this project to be intriguing," said Father Phillips. "The idea of describing our program, and then letting it be assessed for its catholicity and effectiveness by a neutral third party — experts in the field — was a challenge we were eager to accept."

Father Phillips said he would recommend the program.

"There were things we were doing very well, and the assessment helped us see how we could strengthen what we do," said Father Phillips. "When it comes to assessing



a Catholic school, it's always a good thing to look at every aspect of it, and that's what the Catholic Identity Assessment did. Our original vision was affirmed, and we received suggestions which have given us guidance in making aspects of our program even better."

Father Stravinkas, who has taught and served as an administrator in Catholic elementary, secondary and college-level institutions, is a well-known author and holds a number of advanced degrees.

He said that the program will assist Catholic schools in developing a more unified method of teaching — a biology class dealing with genetic structure, for example, might be a proper place to discuss *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical upholding the Church's teaching on the immorality of artificial contraception. Students must learn to "connect the dots" between various academic fields, Father Stravinkas said.

"The God question is never inappropriate in any class. Whenever the God question naturally surfaces, that is the place it needs to be dealt with, and not confined to a 30-minute religion course," said Father Stravinkas.

A strong academic course of studies is essential, Father Stravinkas said.

"When we talk about Catholic schools," the priest said, "the noun is school and the adjective is Catholic. It's got to be a first-rate institution. It's got to be as strong as any

other academic school or we are doing a disservice to the students."

Not Just Academics

But academics are not the sole consideration. A teacher might be asked, for example, if class is stopped so that students can offer a prayer when they hear the siren of an ambulance passing. The priest said that Catholic educators unfamiliar with the practice often say something like "Gee, that's beautiful. We've got to start doing that."

Father Stravinkas also said that Catholic schools should promote "a culture of vocations." Students should find it normal to say to a teacher, "I think Joe may have a vocation to the priesthood."

Noting that Pope Benedict XVI recently spoke to several U.S. bishops about the importance of Catholic colleges and universities having a strong Catholic identity, Father Stravinkas said that this program tries to do the same thing for high schools and elementary schools.

Father Phillips concurred: "It is an effective tool to help us accomplish what the Church wants us to be doing in the way of educating our young people: giving them an authentically Catholic education, which is to form them spiritually, intellectually and physically, helping them to become virtuous and moral individuals."

Charlotte Hays
National Catholic Register
May 18, 2012



Excerpt from the 123rd Annual Commencement Address at Catholic University of America by Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, May 12, 2012

Just six days ago, Pope Benedict XVI, in addressing bishops from Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Wyoming, spoke warmly of Catholic education here in the United States, and of the need of our Catholic colleges and universities “. . . to reaffirm their distinctive identity in fidelity to their founding ideals and the Church’s mission in service to the Gospel.”

The Holy Father showed a somber realism, though, when he expanded that need to include “. . . ecclesial communion and solidarity in the Church’s educational apostolate, becoming all the more evident when we consider the confusion created by instances of apparent dissidence between some representatives of Catholic institutions and the Church’s pastoral leadership . . .”

Is not a big part of our gladness and pride this happy morning of graduation a grateful recognition that this university does indeed exude such “ecclesial communion and solidarity”? That this university is both *Catholic* and *American*, flowing from the most noble ideals of truth and respect for human dignity that are at the heart of our Church and our country? That a university’s genuine greatness comes not from pursuing what is most chic, recent, or faddish, but what is most timeless, true, good, and beautiful in creation and creatures? That the true goal of a university is to prepare a student not only for a career but for fullness of life here and in eternity?

Some might wonder if Pope Benedict’s description of a university is way too im-

practical; if a university can be really Catholic *and* American; if the genuine freedom a university demands can flourish on a campus whose very definition includes a loyalty to Holy Mother Church . . . well, to them I say, as you and I did, “Let them come to Brookland!” This university you can now, with me, call *alma mater*, at the heart of our nation, is also *ex corde ecclesiae*, at the heart of the Church. For that I am most proud.

The Holy Father mentions not only *truth* as being at the core of the mission of a Catholic university, but also *love*. And so I want to tell you about a wonderful woman named Clara Almazo. Just a little over a month ago, Clara and her little eight-year-old grandson, Michael, were walking home from Holy Thursday Mass at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish on Staten Island. As they crossed the street, a car barreled toward them, with little Michael in the crosshairs. His *abuela*, Grandma Clara, pushed her grandson away to safety, taking herself the whole force of the car, and was instantly killed.

Clara’s selfless act of heroic love was, as you might imagine, the tearful talk of New York over the Easter weekend. No one failed to note that her life-giving act was made the more poignant as it came on the night before Jesus died, returning from the Mass of the Lord’s Last Supper, when He predicted His own sacrificial death, and where He gave the touching example of selfless service in washing the feet of His apostles.



When I celebrated her funeral on Easter Tuesday, every one of her 13 children and 23 grandchildren were profoundly sad; but not one of them was surprised, for through their sobs, they told me she was a woman of constant, heroic, selfless giving.

Jesus Christ . . . His Church . . . this university . . . Clara Almazo . . . truth . . . love . . . the words of Pope Benedict . . . the achievement and the hopes of the Class of 2012 . . .

Let me try to bring all of these together with the coherence I learned at this University.

Might I suggest these all coalesce in what we call the *Law of the Gift*.

“Greater love than this no one has, than to give one’s life for one’s friends.” There’s the *Law of the Gift* as defined by the Son of God Himself.

“It is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.” There’s the *Law of the Gift* as chanted by St. Francis.

"I know Jesus Christ, who sacrificed His life for others. I understand well the meaning of the cross. I am ready to give up my life for my people." There's the *Law of the Gift* as stated by Shabaz Bhatti, a Catholic who served as federal minister for religious minorities in Pakistan.

“For we are at our best, we are most fully alive and human, when we give away freely and sacrificially our very selves in love for another.” There’s the *Law of the Gift* as described by Blessed John Paul II.

Not long ago at a dinner I sat next to Admiral Mike Mullen, a Marine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, himself a Catholic, who asked me, “What percent of the American population is Catholic?”

I replied, “I’m not sure exactly but I think about 24%.”

“But do you realize,” he went on, “that 40% of the Marine Corps identify themselves as Catholic?”

I did not realize that, but I was not surprised, nor was Admiral Mullen, for at the heart of the Church’s ethos is the *Law of the Gift*, and it would be tough to be a Marine — or to be an *abuela* like Clara Almazo — if you didn’t believe in that.

Or, as the head of the department of pediatric oncology at a leading hospital recently told me, “Cardinal Dolan, I’m not even a religious believer, but, when I hire doctors, nurses, attendants, or staff for this grueling work of trying to heal kids with cancer, the applicants who are alumni of Catholic schools have a leg up.”

I didn’t know that either, but I’m hardly surprised, for, while it’s sure not listed in any catalogue, the course on the *Law of the Gift* is part of the DNA of any Catholic school, this sterling one included.

So, I conclude that all of you, at this university where every classroom features the most effective audio-visual aid of them all, the crucifix; and where the entire campus is overshadowed by the dome of the shrine devoted to the Jewish woman who whispered, “Be it done unto me according to your will, not mine,” that I’m looking out at



graduates who have majored in this *Law of the Gift*.

Now, let's be clear: I'm hardly claiming that Catholics have sole "bragging rights" on fostering, protecting, and obeying this *Law of the Gift*. The exaltation of selfless, sacrificial love and service is at the marrow of every religion, and, as a matter of fact, on the ground floor of most purely humanistic values.

However, even our critics admit that a particularly pointed contribution that religion, that the Church, that faith makes to any enduring culture, society, or nation is that it has a honed talent to foster, protect, and obey the *Law of the Gift*.

Without the *Law of the Gift*, we have no Marines, fewer effective pediatric oncologists, and no Clara Almazos or Shabaz Bhattis. Religion, faith, the Church promote a culture built on the *Law of the Gift*. Thus, wise people from Alexis de Tocqueville to John Courtney Murray — both of whose work I was forced to read while a student here — have observed that an essential ingredient in American wisdom and the genius of the American republic is the freedom it allows for religion to flourish. Thus would I predict that a challenge you, Class of 2012, will inevitably face is the defense of religious freedom as part of both our American and creedal legacy.

Now, one final thing: You all had a head-start in learning the *Law of the Gift* and the importance of faith to sustain it.

See, the *Law of the Gift* is most poetically exemplified in the lifelong, life-giving, faithful, intimate union of a man and woman in marriage, which then leads to the procreation of new life in babies, so that

husband and wife, now father and mother, spend their lives sacrificially loving and giving to those children. That union — that sacred rhythm of man/woman/husband/wife/baby/mother/father — is so essential to the order of the common good that its very definition is ingrained into our interior dictionary, that its protection and flourishing is the aim of enlightened culture.

And your tutelage in the *Law of the Gift*, Class of 2012, was only refined here at this Catholic University, for it began in the most sublime classroom of them all, your home and family, under the most significant of all professors, your mom and dad. Congratulations, parents of our graduates!

That we are at our best when we give ourselves away in love to another — the *Law of the Gift* — is I'm afraid, "counter-cultural" today, in an era that prefers getting to giving, and entitlement to responsibility; in a society that considers every drive, desire, or urge as a right, and where convenience and privacy can trump even the right to life itself; and in a mindset where freedom is reduced to the liberty to do whatever we want, wherever we want, whenever, however, with whomever we want, rather than the duty to do what we ought . . . well, the *Law of the Gift* can be as ignored as a yellow traffic light in New York City.

At one of the eighth grade commencements I attended, as referred to earlier, the fourteen-year-old student speaker called his classmates to pay attention to the words of John F. Kennedy, fifty-two years ago, observing that the temptations he and his classmates were facing now is to ask what your family, your friends, your church, and your country can do *for* you, rather than what you can do for them.



Not bad advice at all, leading me to conclude that this parish grade school was also granting degrees in the *Law of the Gift*.

So, I praise God that I look out at graduates in admiration, affection, and appreciation among whom are new Clara Almazos,

children of beaming parents, alumni of a university where goodness, truth, and beauty reign and where every student majors in the *Law of the Gift*.

Congratulations, Class of 2012!



Inner-city Boys Receive Classical Education at Catholic School

Good morals, academic excellence expected of youths in rough neighborhood

In a Cincinnati, Ohio, neighborhood that in 2006 had the highest crime rate in the city, 20 boys, grades K to 8, start their school days reciting prayers in Latin. There are crucifixes in the classrooms and the students study the classics and subjects taught in challenging ways.

Barry Williams, headmaster at St. Peter Claver Latin School For Boys, is proud of them.

“Our students are bright and hard-working,” he said. “And we have parental involvement — we expect it. Parents want their children to be here because they want them to have a chance. They don’t want their boys to fall prey to what they see in the neighborhoods.”

Priest’s Vision

Over-the-Rhine was once an ethnic German neighborhood and is now the largest, most intact urban historic district in the country. In recent decades, it had a negative distinction for its high crime, and for its four days of rioting in 2001.

Father Albert Lauer came to Over-the-Rhine in 1998 as pastor of Old St. Mary’s Church and had a vision that, given a good start, neighborhood boys could graduate from high school and attend college. He opened the school in 2001, naming it after St. Peter Claver (1580-1654), a Spanish Jesuit missionary who devoted his life to slaves who were brought to Colombia.

Nearly half the students were expelled in that first year, and in 2002, Father Lauer died of cancer. But the school found a place in a community desperate for hope. Donors now pick up the \$5,000 tuitions that parents can’t afford and also contribute \$260,000 of the more than \$333,000 in the current budget.

For many things, they make do. There is no gym in the school that was once a Catholic school administration building. So they play basketball in the basement of the nearby Salvation Army. There’s no kitchen, so parents, neighbors and parishioners bring lunches.

Williams, a longtime board member and volunteer tutor and fundraiser, became headmaster in 2011. As a retired businessman educated in Catholic schools and university, he knows the importance of teaching virtue and morality, and of developing spirituality with intellect.

Students are challenged to memorize and think logically. They exercise their minds with dates and facts, and in math, they learn to solve problems without calculators.

“We teach them poetry and moral lessons and to dig into facts, state your ground on something and construct valid arguments, not just emotional arguments,” Williams said. “We give them a classical education where they can learn to communicate well on every subject.”



Feeding Mind and Soul

Field trips with donated tickets take students to theater, museums and symphonies that expose them to something beyond “music coming out of a jacked-up car with windows down and speakers blaring,” Williams said. “They learn that there is beautiful music at Music City Hall, and that there are many places and wonderful things to see and do.”

The neighborhood is changing. Redevelopment is bringing the arts and tourism to Over-the-Rhine, pushing the impoverished residents to different neighborhoods. Parents are willing to send their sons to school farther away anyway, and they are seeing the boys going on to good high schools.

The problems today are unreal, especially in the inner city,” Williams said. “Young boys

are going the wrong way and are seeing things that no kid should experience. It’s pretty much over by the time they are 12 or 13 if they are not making the right decisions.”

So at St. Peter Claver Latin School for Boys, Williams and the teachers feed their minds and souls.

“We do as much as we can,” Williams said, “and let the Lord take care of the rest.”

Maryann Gogniat Eidemiller

OSV Newsweekly

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Maryann Gogniat Eidemiller writes from Pennsylvania



Nashville Dominican Sister Appointed to USCCB Education Post

New staffer will focus on evangelization, ‘Ex Corde Ecclesiae,’ Year of Faith.

WASHINGTON — Sister John Mary Fleming, a member of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia in Nashville, Tenn., was named this week the executive director of the Secretariat of Catholic Education of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

The education office assists the bishops’ efforts to address a host of urgent matters, from the implementation of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* to resolving parochial school-funding shortfalls.

Sister John Mary currently serves as the principal of St. Dominic School in Bolingbrook, Ill., one of the order’s 34 schools in 18 dioceses. Among the fastest-growing Catholic teaching orders in the nation, with 275 members, the Nashville Dominicans are noted for their unapologetic commitment to the New Evangelization.

“The bishops are invested in Catholic education from the university level down,” Sister John Mary said in an interview following the May 29 announcement of her appointment. “They view Catholic education as a great support to families and parish communities and want to assist that mission, while recognizing challenges in funding, identity and immigration.”

“The bishops have a great hope for education in this country,” she noted, expressing her desire “to articulate this

hope, to foster it and make it more present to the Catholic community.”

Msgr. Ronny Jenkins, the U.S. bishops’ general secretary, voiced his gratitude to the Nashville Dominicans “for allowing her to accept this appointment.”

“Both she and her religious community have shown a commitment to Catholic education that resonates with our conference and which has been a hallmark of the Catholic Church in this country,” said Father Jenkins in a statement released by the conference.

Over the past 12 years, Sister John Mary served in a number of posts, including as director of education for her congregation, interim vice president of operations and board member at Aquinas College in Nashville, and supervisor of the \$46-million construction project for the order’s motherhouse.

“The USCCB had contacted Mother Ann Marie Karlovic about a possible candidate. We are a teaching congregation, and they were interested in that witness and identity,” said Sister John Mary, who joined a number of candidates for a full interview process.

Assisting the Bishops

The Congregation of St. Cecilia was founded in 1860, when Nashville Bishop James Whelan requested that the congregation open a school in his diocese.



Sister John Mary described its charism as “one that brings the message of the Gospel through teaching and preaching.”

In their K-12 schools and at the university level, she said, “the focus is on preaching Christ, from the vantage point of living a life of virtue. The truth of Christ is present in all the different disciplines. It is a very positive and Christ-centered approach to learning.”

She applauded the U.S. bishops’ campaign to oppose the federal rule mandating contraception, sterilization and abortion drugs in private employee health plans as a pivotal teaching moment for Catholic educators and their students.

“It is wonderful to see the bishops speaking with a single voice, getting that message out to us and involving us in this conversation about religious liberty and the effects this issue will have on us now and in the future,” she said.

Catholic education, she added, can help educate the next generation of citizens about the importance of securing religious liberty.

Sister John Mary holds a licentiate in canon law from The Catholic University of America and advanced degrees in theology and educational leadership and supervision.

While individual members of the congregation earn degrees in a variety of academic disciplines, she noted that each “strives to help our students know that Christ is very much a part of our life. You can’t love what you don’t know.”

Marie Powell, the present executive director of the U.S. bishops’ Secretariat of Catholic Education, who will step down this summer, explained that the post involved staffing the

U.S. bishops’ Committee on Catholic Education, which includes nine bishops and additional consultants.

“The role is to assist the bishops in choosing priorities and implementing their plans,” said Powell, whose list of priority items includes a number of hot-button issues.

Ex Corde Report

One committee responsibility is overseeing the implementation of [*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*](#), John Paul II’s exhortation on Catholic identity in higher education. Powell noted that the committee was in the final stage of compiling a report on nationwide consultations between bishops and Catholic university presidents. That report awaits a final review by Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, the USCCB president, before it will be released to the public.

Last year, committee members joined diocesan school superintendents and staff from the National Catholic Education Association for a meeting in Chicago that addressed the thorny problem of financing Catholic parochial schools.

The meeting, Powell reported, “brought in diocesan fiscal managers to hear about some innovative ways schools were being funded.”

Powell has also been engaged in a study of how Catholic schools can attract more Hispanic students — a reminder that tuition increases have made it tough for many Hispanic families to enroll their children in parochial schools, and thus making it difficult to repeat the pattern of social and economic advancement open to previous immigrant groups.



Over the past decade, demographic decline in the Northeast has paved the way for massive school closings, marking the emergence of regional schools. But dioceses in the South have witnessed a pronounced growth in student numbers.

The Nashville Dominicans have participated in that growth. Thus, while Sister John Mary acknowledges the need for fresh approaches to Catholic school funding, she also stresses the diversity of current trends.

“There needs to be a concerted effort to try to come up with something more viable in the near future, and that challenge will take the involvement of the whole Catholic community,” she predicted.

“But while schools are closing in one part of the country, elsewhere they are building and re-establishing parish schools. There is still lots of support for Catholic schools” from private donors.

Sister John Mary has worked in the Diocese of Joliet, Ill., to help plan for the Year of Faith, which begins this October. And in her new post, she will guide an effort to identify ways that U.S. Catholic schools might celebrate this period.

In March, Pope Benedict, announced an upcoming Year of Faith inextricably connected to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. In *Porta Fidei*, the motu proprio in which the Pope announced the special year, Benedict asks us “to hold up the beauty of the Catechism, the [Second Vatican] Council and the Creed. These three realities have been a gift to us, and any materials put

before our students” should manifest this, noted Sister John Mary.

Like most Nashville Dominicans, Sister John Mary has spent a great deal of time in the classroom. But she has also developed expertise in management and brick-and-mortar issues, serving in a number of administration roles, including the restructuring of Aquinas College from a two-year to a four-year undergraduate program.

Dominican Sister Mary Sarah Galbraith, the president of Aquinas College, told the Register that Sister John Mary was valued as “a gifted, versatile person who is able to take on almost any task with great competency and bring it to completion. She is well prepared for this position.”

Sister Mary Sarah suggested that the congregation’s charism and traditions would serve the U.S. bishops’ appointee well.

The Nashville Dominicans, she said, “have been in the same business for 150 years. There is some sort of a gift that each is given in a way that is excellent. The face of Catholic education is changing, and we are pricing ourselves out. Something has to change, and when you are steeped in a tradition, that gives you confidence to do something bold.”

Joan Frawley Desmond
National Catholic Register
June 1, 2012

Joan Frawley Desmond is the Register’s senior editor



Pope Benedict XVI's Discourse to Region XIII of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Dear Brother Bishops,

I greet all of you with affection in the Lord and I offer you my prayerful good wishes for a grace-filled pilgrimage *ad limina Apostolorum*. In the course of our meetings I have been reflecting with you and your Brother Bishops on the intellectual and cultural challenges of the new evangelization in the context of contemporary American society. In the present talk, I wish to address the question of religious education and the faith formation of the next generation of Catholics in your country. Before all else, I would acknowledge the great progress that has been made in recent years in improving catechesis, reviewing texts and bringing them into conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Important efforts are also being made to preserve the great patrimony of America's Catholic elementary and high schools, which have been deeply affected by changing demographics and increased costs, while at the same time ensuring that the education they provide remains within the reach of all families, whatever their financial status. As has often been mentioned in our meetings, these schools remain an essential resource for the new evangelization, and the significant contribution that they make to American society as a whole ought to be better appreciated and more generously supported.

On the level of higher education, many of you have pointed to a growing recognition on the part of Catholic colleges and universities of the need to reaffirm their distinctive identity in fidelity to their founding ideals and the Church's mission in

service of the Gospel. Yet much remains to be done, especially in such basic areas as compliance with the mandate laid down in Canon 812 for those who teach theological disciplines. The importance of this canonical norm as a tangible expression of ecclesial communion and solidarity in the Church's educational apostolate becomes all the more evident when we consider the confusion created by instances of apparent dissidence between some representatives of Catholic institutions and the Church's pastoral leadership: such discord harms the Church's witness and, as experience has shown, can easily be exploited to compromise her authority and her freedom.

It is no exaggeration to say that providing young people with a sound education in the faith represents the most urgent internal challenge facing the Catholic community in your country. The deposit of faith is a priceless treasure which each generation must pass on to the next by winning hearts to Jesus Christ and shaping minds in the knowledge, understanding and love of his Church. It is gratifying to realize that, in our day too, the Christian vision, presented in its breadth and integrity, proves immensely appealing to the imagination, idealism and aspirations of the young, who have a right to encounter the faith in all its beauty, its intellectual richness and its radical demands.

Here I would simply propose several points which I trust will prove helpful for your discernment in meeting this challenge. First, as we know, the essential task of authentic education at every level is not simply that of passing on knowledge, essential as this is, but also of shaping



hearts. There is a constant need to balance intellectual rigor in communicating effectively, attractively and integrally, the richness of the Church's faith with forming the young in the love of God, the praxis of the Christian moral and sacramental life and, not least, the cultivation of personal and liturgical prayer.

It follows that the question of Catholic identity, not least at the university level, entails much more than the teaching of religion or the mere presence of a chaplaincy on campus. All too often, it seems, Catholic schools and colleges have failed to challenge students to reappropriate their faith as part of the exciting intellectual discoveries which mark the experience of higher education. The fact that so many new students find themselves dissociated from the family, school and community support systems that previously facilitated the transmission of the faith should continually spur Catholic institutions of learning to create new and effective networks of support. In every aspect of their education, students need to be encouraged to articulate a vision of the harmony of faith and reason capable of guiding a life-long pursuit of knowledge and virtue. As ever, an essential role in this process is played by teachers who inspire others by their evident love of Christ, their witness of sound devotion and their commitment to that sapientia Christiana which integrates faith and life, intellectual passion and reverence for the splendor of truth both human and divine.

In effect, faith by its very nature demands a constant and all-embracing conversion to the fullness of truth revealed in Christ. He is the creative Logos, in whom all things were made and in whom all reality "holds together" (Col 1:17); he is the new Adam who reveals the ultimate truth about man and the world in which we live. In a period

of great cultural change and societal displacement not unlike our own, Augustine pointed to this intrinsic connection between faith and the human intellectual enterprise by appealing to Plato, who held, he says, that "to love wisdom is to love God" (cf. *De Civitate Dei*, VIII, 8). The Christian commitment to learning, which gave birth to the medieval universities, was based upon this conviction that the one God, as the source of all truth and goodness, is likewise the source of the intellect's passionate desire to know and the will's yearning for fulfilment in love.

Only in this light can we appreciate the distinctive contribution of Catholic education, which engages in a "diakonia of truth" inspired by an intellectual charity which knows that leading others to the truth is ultimately an act of love (cf. *Address to Catholic Educators*, Washington, 17 April 2008). Faith's recognition of the essential unity of all knowledge provides a bulwark against the alienation and fragmentation which occurs when the use of reason is detached from the pursuit of truth and virtue; in this sense, Catholic institutions have a specific role to play in helping to overcome the crisis of universities today. Firmly grounded in this vision of the intrinsic interplay of faith, reason and the pursuit of human excellence, every Christian intellectual and all the Church's educational institutions must be convinced, and desirous of convincing others, that no aspect of reality remains alien to, or untouched by, the mystery of the redemption and the Risen Lord's dominion over all creation.

During my Pastoral Visit to the United States, I spoke of the need for the Church in America to cultivate "a mindset, an intellectual culture which is genuinely Catholic" (cf. *Homily at Nationals Stadium*, Washington, 17 April 2008). Taking up this



task certainly involves a renewal of apologetics and an emphasis on Catholic distinctiveness; ultimately however it must be aimed at proclaiming the liberating truth of Christ and stimulating greater dialogue and cooperation in building a society ever more solidly grounded in an authentic humanism inspired by the Gospel and faithful to the highest values of America's civic and cultural heritage. At the present moment of your nation's history, this is the challenge and opportunity awaiting the entire Catholic community, and it is one which the Church's educational institutions should be the first to acknowledge and embrace.

In concluding these brief reflections, I wish to express once more my gratitude, and that of the whole Church, for the generous commitment, often accompanied by personal sacrifice, shown by so many teachers and administrators who work in the vast network of Catholic schools in your country. To you, dear Brothers, and to all the faithful entrusted to your pastoral care, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of wisdom, joy and peace in the Risen Lord.

From the Vatican, 5 May 2012



Vouchers Help Catholic Schools Survive

Poll shows 56% in support of government assistance. Programs expanding, helping to keep parochial schools afloat.

At least partly thanks to a growing wave of states enacting school voucher programs, many Catholic schools are again seeing increased enrolments.

Indiana began offering vouchers in 2011, as did Douglas County, Colo., while Congress reinstated the District of Columbia's voucher system that had been defunded by the Obama administration. Now, nine states, the District of Columbia and a single school board in Colorado offer vouchers, while four other states offer educational savings accounts, scholarships or other aid. These plans cover 210,000 students across America, up sevenfold from 2000.

Estimating that more than 50% of the students using vouchers in many cities are going to Catholic schools, John Schilling, the chief operating officer of the non-sectarian Alliance for School Choice, offered this explanation: "The Catholic schools have been successfully educating children from every economic and ethnic background for decades, and doing it very well. Tragically, we are seeing a lot of Catholic schools closing. One of the promising things about the expansion of vouchers is that it could keep those schools and opportunities open."

From 2002 to 2010, enrollment at Catholic schools across America fell from 2.6 million to 2 million, while more than 1,000 schools closed. Meanwhile, public-school enrollment has climbed steadily from 53.3 million in 2000 to 55.3 million in 2010. But while Catholic enrollment fell 2.5% a year over

the first decade of the century, last year it dropped only 1.7%.

Karen Ristau, president of the National Catholic Education Association, believes she knows why.

The decline in enrollment is "definitely slowing," she said, "and vouchers are a part of it."

Catholic schools appear to be the main beneficiaries of vouchers — and for good reason, Ristau said. "Our schools are very good, they are very welcoming, and they are faith-based. They are what people want."

Moreover, the graduation rate at Catholic schools is above 99%, compared to 75% at America's public schools — or 56% for public schools in the 50 biggest U.S. cities.

Intrinsic Worth

It also helps that Catholic tuition rates are reasonably low — at \$3,600 on average for elementary school and \$8,100 for high school, compared with the slightly more than \$10,000 spent — on average — on each public-school student. The average scholarship amount across the nine states with vouchers is \$5,900. (The public schools receive on average \$10,000 per pupil.) It also helps that Catholic schools are well established in inner cities.

So schools such as St. Augustine's in Barberton, Ohio, just south of Cleveland, and St. Stanislaus in East Chicago, Ind.,



have dusted the cobwebs off the desks and removed them from attics and crawlspaces for students using vouchers provided by their state governments. Indiana's is the newest voucher program; Ohio's is among the country's oldest.

Though Catholic schools are open to all, said Ristau, the main users of vouchers are Catholics who simply couldn't afford the tuition without state support.

But why do students do so much better at Catholic schools? Ristau credits the higher level of commitment from both the school staff and parents. "The parents and students have chosen us. They want to be here, and they want to stay here, so they do the work. And the school staff believe in the intrinsic worth of each person as one of God's children."

The Second Vatican Council discussed the importance of Christian education in *Gravissimum Educationis*: "Since all Christians have become by rebirth of water and the Holy Spirit a new creature so that they should be called and should be children of God, they have a right to a Christian education. A Christian education ... has as its principal purpose this goal: that the baptized, while they are gradually introduced to the knowledge of the mystery of salvation, become ever more aware of the gift of faith they have received, and that they learn in addition how to worship God the Father in spirit and truth (cf. John 4:23) especially in liturgical action, and be conformed in their personal lives according to the new man created in justice and holiness of truth (Eph. 4:22-24); also that they develop into perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:13) and strive for the growth of the Mystical Body; moreover, that aware of

their calling, they learn not only how to bear witness to the hope that is in them (cf. 1 Peter 3:15) but also how to help in the Christian formation of the world that takes place when natural powers viewed in the full consideration of man redeemed by Christ contribute to the good of the whole society. Wherefore this sacred synod recalls to pastors of souls their most serious obligation to see to it that all the faithful, but especially the youth who are the hope of the Church, enjoy this Christian education."

Catching Up

Although children generally do better in Catholic schools, hard work is required of everyone when students who transfer into Catholic schools are already two to three years behind where they should be in academics, said Judy Nakasian, special projects coordinator for the Diocese of Cleveland's Office of Education. "The earlier they come to us, the more we can do for them. If they are already in high school, it is really difficult."

Ohio has had vouchers for more than a decade, and its program cleared the way for others by winning a Supreme Court challenge in 2002.

While the Diocese's schools have declined in enrollment from 50,000 to 47,000 in the last decade, Cleveland's public schools have fallen from 54,000 to 47,000. Students on vouchers or state scholarships account for 12% of the Catholic school enrollment. "Because of vouchers, our enrollment is stabilizing," said Nakasian. She cited St. Augustine School in Barberton, which increased its enrollment by 64 this year.

Ohio's voucher system is intended to offer an alternative to inferior public schools, and



only students enrolled or about to be enrolled in schools that have been evaluated as inferior are eligible. Throughout the state, 140 public schools are rated low enough for their students to get vouchers. There are 220 private schools that are eligible, most of them Catholic.

Public Divided

Across the U.S., the public is divided on the merits of vouchers. The National School Board Association, a strong opponent of any form of state support for private schools, including vouchers, lists 11 referendums since 1972 in which state (or District of Columbia) voters have rejected such measures.

But a Friedman Foundation for Education Choice national [poll](#) released on Mother's Day showed 56% of those surveyed supported vouchers vs. 28% opposed. On the other hand, a 2011 poll by Phi Delta

Kappa, the professional organization for educators, shows Americans' support for vouchers or similar programs diminishing from 46% in 2002 to 34% last year.

There is similar disagreement over results of educational-choice measures. The National School Board Association cites studies showing public-school students do no better after transferring to private schools, while the Alliance for School Choice lists other studies showing such students are 20% more likely to graduate than the classmates they left behind. As well, according to ASC data, parents of such children are happier with their schools and rate them as safer.

Steve Weatherbe
National Catholic Register
June 26, 2012

Register correspondent Steve Weatherbe writes from Victoria, British Columbia.



Why Catholic Schools Are Worth Saving

This Sunday, May 20, is “Voucher Sunday.” You won’t find it on the Catholic liturgical calendar, but this year in Pennsylvania, it’s a vital day nonetheless.

Over the past few months, people across the Archdiocese have been working with renewed urgency and zeal to rebuild the health of our Catholic schools. Alumni and alumnae have rallied to financially support their alma maters. Private donors have been generous. But in the long run — as I’ve already cautioned several times — some of our schools will be forced to close without the passage of opportunity scholarships (i.e., school-choice vouchers) and increased Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) funding. This isn’t a “maybe.” It’s a certainty driven by economic facts.

Without vouchers, we simply can’t continue to bear the heavy cost of operating schools that are financially unsustainable, despite the great service they provide to the wider community.

The value to society of a good education no matter who provides it can be illustrated with a simple story.

About a decade ago, I came across a story in *The New York Times*. The headline read: “Why the ignorant are blissful: Inept individuals ooze confidence, study shows.” It turns out that David Dunning, a professor at Cornell, did a study of incompetence. What he discovered is that most incompetent people don’t know they’re incompetent. In fact, he learned that people who do things badly tend to be very confident about their ability. They’re often more confident than the people who do things well.

Dunning went on to find that the ignorant overestimate their abilities for a good reason. The skills they lack in order to be competent are usually the same skills they need to recognize incompetence. In fact, said one of Dunning’s colleagues, “not only do [incompetent people] reach erroneous conclusions and make unfortunate choices, but their incompetence robs them of the ability to realize it.”

Now that’s a true story, and we can smile at it. A good sense of humor, like a good sense of humility, can keep us healthy and sane. But the lesson I want to draw from it today is a serious one. Education matters because it forms the young people who will create the future of our country. Sophisticated technology does not make a person whole. It can’t create an unselfish spirit or a mature human heart. Fools with tools are still fools.

The genius of Catholic schools, when they’re led with passion and adequate resources, is that they create a lifelong love of learning; they teach the academic skills to achieve real excellence, not just in the classroom but in adult life; and they shape the kind of moral character that makes for worthy citizenship and an honorable life. This is the dignity God intends for His people. This is why Catholic schools succeed where others often fail. This is why they’re worth fighting to save.

Catholic and other non-public schools currently save Pennsylvania taxpayers more than \$4 billion every year. School-choice legislation that includes vouchers and increased EITC funding reinforces the fact that parents — not the state — are the primary educators of their children.



Legislation currently being drafted in Harrisburg could usher in a new, more just era for education in Pennsylvania; an era in which we focus on the ideal educational environment for each student, not on a mandatory system where students are assigned to a school based solely on geographic location.

The next three weeks are crucial. These coming days will determine the success or failure of school-choice efforts in our Commonwealth. Our Catholic schools and the many students who benefit from them depend on your voice. I ask you — I urge you — to please contact your state

representative and state senator. Call them. Write them. E-mail them. Visit them. Press your legislators to bring this bill up and support vouchers and increased EITC funding. It's so important. Please speak up now.

Use the Pennsylvania Catholic Advocacy Network to e-mail your state legislators in support of school vouchers and increased EITC funding at www.pacatholic.org.

Archbishop Charles Chaput
Catholic Philly
May 16, 2012



Statement of Archbishop Charles Chaput on the Passage of House Bill 761

Today is an important day for students across Pennsylvania and the hardworking parents and guardians who sacrifice so much to provide their children with an education that will prepare them for the future. Our state legislature has taken the first critical step in giving all students a chance for lifelong success by giving families a real educational choice with the passage of House Bill 761.

There are many legislative leaders to thank in helping to pass this piece of legislation. Specifically, I want to express my gratitude to Governor Tom Corbett, Lieutenant Governor Jim Cawley as well as Senator Tony Williams and Representative Mike Vereb, who championed school choice legislation throughout the spring. I also wish to thank Senators Dominic Pileggi, Jeffrey Piccola and Vincent Hughes, Representative Jim Christiana, Speaker Sam Smith, Majority Leader Mike Turzai as well as Representatives Mike Gerber, Brendan Boyle and Kevin Boyle for their ongoing support and efforts. The entire Pennsylvania State Legislature is to be commended for identifying and securing the funds that allowed House Bill 761 to pass both chambers late last night. This expansion of EITC by \$25 million and the creation of EITC 2 at \$50 million is a strong first step toward what we need to help secure Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia

and to provide families across our Commonwealth with real choices in how to best educate their children.

I am also appreciative that our local legislators in the five-county Philadelphia region acted upon the unprecedented outpouring of support for this legislation by Catholics in the Archdiocese. Whether it was our youngest voters — in our high school students — passionately advocating for their education in our parishes or student rallies at our high schools or thousands of phone calls, e-mails and letters sent to local legislators, the Catholic voice was heard in Harrisburg and action was rightfully taken.

While there is still much more to be done legislatively on the issue of school choice, the passage of this legislation will immediately help our state's most vulnerable students — those within the bottom 15 percent of “failing schools” as well as those with physical and learning disabilities — by providing additional funds to their families through “opportunity scholarships.” With our four elementary schools for special education, the Bonaventure and Drexel Programs at the high school level to address learning disabilities and our strong elementary and secondary systems, we welcome the opportunity to serve even more students through EITC and now, EITC 2.



Vouchers Unspoken, Romney Hails School Choice

“Voucher” is a fighting word in education, so it may be understandable that when Mitt Romney speaks about improving the nation’s schools, he never uses that term.

Nonetheless, as president, Mr. Romney would seek to overhaul the federal government’s largest programs for kindergarten through 12th grade into a voucherlike system. Students would be free to use \$25 billion in federal money to attend any school they choose — public, charter, online or private — a system, he said, that would introduce marketplace dynamics into education to drive academic gains.

His plans, presented in a recent [speech](#) at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, represent a broad overhaul of current policy, one that reverses a quarter-century trend, under Republican and Democratic presidents, of concentrating responsibility for school quality at the federal level.

“I will expand parental choice in an unprecedented way,” Mr. Romney said, adding that families’ freedom to vote with their feet “will hold schools responsible for results.”

His proposals are the clearest sign yet that Republicans have executed an about-face from the education policies of President George W. Bush, whose signature domestic initiative, the [No Child Left Behind](#) law of 2002, required uniform state testing and imposed penalties on schools that failed to progress.

Now Mr. Romney is taking his party back to its ideological roots by emphasizing a lesser role for Washington, replacing top-down mandates with a belief in market

mechanisms. It is a change driven in part by [Tea Party](#) disdain of the federal government. In the Republican presidential nominating fight, candidates competed in calling to shut the Education Department.

Mr. Romney, who never went that far, also seems hemmed in politically by the fact that President Obama promotes many solutions that were once Republican talking points, including [charter schools](#) and teacher evaluations tied to test scores.

“There’s not much left for Republicans to be distinctive about,” said Chester E. Finn, Jr., president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, an education policy group. “The one line the Obama folks have refused to cross is the voucher line” — that is, allowing students to use taxpayer money to attend any certified school, even a private school.

Specifically, Mr. Romney [proposed](#) to change federal payments made to schools with large numbers of poor and disabled students into an individual entitlement. Students would take a share of the \$25 billion in two federal programs to the school of their choice.

He would also extract the federal government from intervening to turn around the lowest performing schools, which has been a chief focus of the Obama administration. Instead, to drive improvement, Mr. Romney would have schools compete for students in a more market-based approach to quality.

“This is the best motive to reform there will ever be — if you give parents the ability to vote with their feet,” said Tom Luna,



Idaho's superintendent of schools, who is an adviser to Mr. Romney.

But there is limited evidence in the real world of schools improving much as they compete for students, according to education experts.

One notable skeptic is Margaret Spellings, a former education secretary under Mr. Bush, who this year was an informal adviser to Mr. Romney. She said she withdrew once the candidate rejected strong federal accountability measures.

"I have long supported and defended and believe in a muscular federal role on school accountability," Ms. Spellings said. "Vouchers and choice as the drivers of accountability — obviously that's untried and untested."

Although offering economically disadvantaged children an escape from a failing neighborhood school may be a matter of fairness, Mr. Romney's argument is broader: choice, he said, will promote competition for students and, like a rising tide, lift all schools.

One recent [study](#) of a Florida program offering private school vouchers to low-income families found that test scores at public schools, faced with competition, went up.

But critics say that the improvements are small, and that the idea is shaped by ideology more than evidence. "Romney is on poor empirical ground in making a claim based on competitive effects," said Christopher Lubienski, an education professor at the University of Illinois.

James Kvaal, the policy director of the Obama campaign, accused Mr. Romney of seeking to "stop the clock on decades of reform by no longer insisting action be taken when a school has been struggling for years."

Advocates for vouchers say they will have a larger impact if they become more widespread.

One of Mr. Romney's ideas for increasing students' choices seems to contradict an anti-Washington emphasis: giving poor students the freedom to choose a public school outside their district.

District boundaries have long been sacrosanct. They prevent urban students, for example, from enrolling in suburban schools that typically have higher-income families and sometimes more lavish budgets.

Calls for open enrollment across districts are usually the province of liberal groups, said Kevin Carey, director of education policy at the New America Foundation, a nonpartisan research group. "For the federal government to require districts to open up their boundaries would be a level of federal intrusion into the affairs of states and local districts far beyond anything" in current law, Mr. Carey said.

Mr. Romney's policy seems closely inspired by a pro-voucher [report](#) issued in February by the conservative Hoover Institution. Five of eight members of a task force that produced the report are among the 19 education advisers the Romney campaign named last month.

Once thought to be moribund, the voucher movement was revived by gains Republicans made in the 2010 midterm



elections. Fourteen states since then have introduced or expanded private school vouchers, according to the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice.

The money for the vouchers would come from two federal programs that Mr. Romney would overhaul that target students deemed in need of extra support: Title 1, for economically disadvantaged students; and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Currently the money from both programs, the largest K-12 initiatives in the Education Department, is awarded to states and districts based on federal formulas.

Grover J. Whitehurst, a Romney adviser, said that remaking the programs into

individual payments that follow the student — he used the metaphor of a student’s backpack — could attract other streams of education dollars.

“If you connected state funding with federal funding, then you’re talking about a backpack with enough money in it to really empower choice,” said Mr. Whitehurst, director of education policy at the Brookings Institution. “The idea would be the federal Title 1 funds would allow states that want to move in this direction to do so, and if they did so, all of a sudden it’s a game changer.”

[Trip Gabriel](#)

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Brazilian Beach Volleyball Player Says Catholic School Taught Values

RIO DE JANEIRO (CNS) — In the Catholic classroom, the beach volleyball player learned the value of discipline and humility. Olympian Maria Elisa Antonelli, 28, credits her Salesian education as teaching her valuable lessons and recognizing her potential. "I received some very good lessons about life, and I learned how to be a professional player at school," she said during a 2010 visit to her school, the Salesian St. Joseph Institute in Resende, where she also spoke of the values she learned. "It's a different sort of school, offering the students a privileged path, and it was there that I first began playing

volleyball," she said. "I'm very proud and grateful for all those who have been and are part of my development in volleyball. If I have got where I am, I owe a lot to the Salesians, and now I count on all their support." Antonelli's spot on Brazil's Olympic roster was officially announced at a late-June news conference in Rio de Janeiro. She will partner with Talita Antunes da Rocha. In pre-Olympic rankings, they were fifth in the world.

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