

# THE CATHOLIC EDUCATOR

*Quarterly Journal of the Catholic Education Foundation*



**Advanced Notice:**

The 5th Annual Workshop on  
“The Role of the Priest in Today’s Catholic School”  
will be held at Seton Hall University from July 16-19, 2019.

Stay tuned for further details.

**Volume 23 – Winter 2018**

## *A Word From Our Editor*

### Catholic Schools in the Place of the Youth Synod?

The final document of the youth synod, just concluded – amazingly – has only one paragraph (n. 158) on Catholic schools. As inadequate as the *Instrumentum Laboris* was in many ways, it devoted several paragraphs to this apostolate of the Church. When anyone thinks of the Catholic Church – whether that person is Catholic or not – after the Mass, the outreach that springs to mind spontaneously and justly is her educational system. Untold millions (two million in the United States alone) receive an elementary and secondary education under the aegis of the Church. Indeed, it would be fair to say that the one ecclesial environment in which you are sure to find young people is in the Church's schools!

I should mention at the outset that the English text I am offering is my own translation of the original Italian, necessitated by the fact that we still lack an official English translation!

What does the Final Document say about schools? It notes, quite correctly, that schools are important because they are “the places in which the majority of youth pass much of their time.” Further, that “in many parts of the world, basic education is the first and most important request which young people make of the Church.” Thus, it is important to have “qualified teachers, significant chaplaincies, and a suitable cultural engagement.” So far, all this could be said of almost any kind of educational institution. What makes a chaplaincy “significant”? What in the world constitutes “a suitable cultural engagement”? This comes off as gibberish, lacking any specificity.

We read that Catholic schools “express the concern of the Church for the integral formation of youth.” True enough, what does “integral formation” entail? Yet again, our schools “are precious spaces for the encounter of the Gospel with the culture of a people and for the development of research.” “Precious spaces for the encounter of the Gospel”? Who speaks like that? What kind of research are we talking about, and at what level (in fact, much of what this paragraph delineates seems primarily geared to university education, rather than primary and secondary schooling).

Then we are informed that Catholic education should be “a model of formation capable of bringing about a dialogue between the faith and the demands of the contemporary world, the diverse anthropological perspectives, the challenges of science and technology, changing social customs, and the engagement for justice.” More gobbledygook. What is the goal of this “dialogue”? Again, nothing concrete.

Finally, we are told that Catholic schools ought to promote “creativity in science, the arts, poetry, literature, music, and sports,” enabling youth to “discover their talents and to place them at the service of society.” Of course, any education worthy of the name will include all these elements – as Catholic education has always done. “Placing [talents] at the service of society” is surely a worthy objective, but what about “at the service of the Church”? A strange omission.

Now, what did the document not say? Or better, what should it have said?

– As Bishop Arthur Kennedy (retired auxiliary of Boston and an educator in his own right) is fond of saying, the Catholic school is the primary engine for the new evangelization, wherein the Church is able to form not only the youth in the schools, but also to influence their parents and even grandparents.

– In mission territory and in the inner cities of the United States, the Catholic school is most often the means by which conversions occur. The redoubtable Cardinal Francis Arinze is a Catholic and a priest, precisely due to attendance at a Catholic school. Nor is it an accident that every black bishop in the United States became a Catholic through a Catholic school experience. How many pastors and principals report entire families coming into the Church every year as a result of having children in our schools? Even when conversions do not take place, the school introduces non-Catholics to a Church which esteems reason and values the dignity of the human person.

– While the document highlights the importance of an “encounter of the Gospel,” it would have been helpful, indeed necessary, to offer a catechetical model, by which that encounter can take place. Catechetical formation is at the very heart of the Catholic school; even non-Catholic students are required to participate in religion classes and liturgical services.

– As any pastoral worker or objective observer will say, the greatest source of peace in the Middle East is the network of Catholic schools, wherein students (Catholics, Protestants, Jews and Muslims) have the experience of peaceful coexistence from childhood on.

– Citing *Gravissimum Educationis* of Vatican II and the *Code of Canon Law*, the Synod Fathers could have reminded parents of their serious obligation to entrust their children to our schools (to ensure that those children have the values of the Church and the family reinforced on a daily basis in the educational environment) and likewise have reminded the entire Catholic community of their obligation to support these institutions.

– It would have been a wise thing to encourage young people to commit themselves to embark upon the school apostolate.

Were there no former teachers among the Synod Fathers? Were there no teachers among the auditors? Was no one in touch with the reality of the Church on the ground, that such an important resource be given such short and shallow shrift? This treatment is an insult to every Catholic school teacher and pastor who give their all to raise up a new generation of “missionary disciples” (to use Francis’ favorite image). St. John Paul II referred to the Catholic school as the very “heart of the Church.” Pope Francis and his Synod have pushed to the school to one of his “peripheries.”

Another missed opportunity.

Rev. Peter Stravinskas

N.B. This issue's cover photo was originally published with the article "How Do We Teach Our Teachers to Nurture the Whole Student?".

## *In This Edition*

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<i>A Word From Our Editor</i> Rev. Peter M.J. Stravinskias	<i>Page 2</i>
<i>Vast Majority of Private School Blue-Ribbon Winners Catholic</i> CNA Daily News	<i>Page 6</i>
<i>This London Catholic School Uses Its Garden to Feed Homeless</i> CNA Daily News	<i>Page 8</i>
<i>Police Arrest Two Girls Who Plotted Satanic Killing at Their Florida School</i> John Burger	<i>Page 9</i>
<i>Nigerian Bishops Urge Child Protection at Education Conference</i> Crux Staff	<i>Page 11</i>
<i>A Dark Consensus about Screens and Kids Begins to Emerge in Silicon Valley</i> Nellie Bowles	<i>Page 13</i>
<i>Gender Ideologues Threaten Alberta's Christian Schools</i> Joseph Woodard	<i>Page 16</i>
<i>Catholic Schools in Australia to Receive Funding Increase</i> CNA Daily News	<i>Page 21</i>
<i>How Do We Teach Our Teachers to Nurture the Whole Student?</i> Javier Fiz Pérez	<i>Page 23</i>
<i>NFL's Philip Rivers Inspires All with Latin Phrase</i> J-P Mauro	<i>Page 25</i>
<i>Excelsior! The Fascinating Story behind Stan Lee's Latin Catchphrase</i> Philip Kosloski	<i>Page 26</i>
<i>Harvard Professor Encourages Us to Change Our View of Achievement and Success</i> Ashley Jonkman	<i>Page 28</i>
<i>Diocese of Sacramento Offers Free Schooling for Students Displaced by Camp Fire</i> Gray Hall, ABC Action News	<i>Page 30</i>
<i>Trump Praises 'Very Special' Nuns Who Sang for Him at National Christmas Tree Lighting</i> Dorothy Cummings McLean	<i>Page 31</i>

<b><i>Shakespeare Poem Found to Have Pro-Catholic Coded Messages</i></b> <i>J-P Mauro</i>	<b><i>Page 32</i></b>
<b><i>The Life-Changing Way a Teacher Greets Her Students Every Morning</i></b> <i>Elizabeth Pardi</i>	<b><i>Page 34</i></b>
<b><i>The Wise Work of the Bees</i></b> <i>David Arias</i>	<b><i>Page 35</i></b>
<b><i>The Skill Your Child Needs to Read Effectively (That Many Schools Have Stopped Teaching)</i></b> <i>Calah Alexander</i>	<b><i>Page 37</i></b>
<b><i>In Jerusalem or Online, A Language School Offers An Immersive Experience in Ancient Languages</i></b> <i>John Burger</i>	<b><i>Page 39</i></b>
<b><i>Young Entrepreneur Creates Virtual Tours of Roman Churches</i></b> <i>John Burger</i>	<b><i>Page 42</i></b>
<b><i>Teaching Character Education with the Anthropology of St. John Paul II</i></b> <i>Edward Pentin</i>	<b><i>Page 44</i></b>
<b><i>Commentary: Is Anyone 'Ready' for Christmas?</i></b> <i>JD Flynn</i>	<b><i>Page 47</i></b>
<b><i>Get Out Now: The Compelling Case against Public Schools</i></b> <i>Jim Russell</i>	<b><i>Page 49</i></b>
<b><i>In Defense of Literature</i></b> <i>K.E. Colombini</i>	<b><i>Page 52</i></b>
<b><i>Back to Basics in "Made This Way"</i></b> <i>Hilary Towers</i>	<b><i>Page 54</i></b>

## Vast Majority of Private School Blue-Ribbon Winners Catholic

The Department of Education has awarded the 2018 National Blue Ribbon to more than three dozen Catholic schools. Of the nearly 50 private schools to receive the designation, almost 90 percent were Catholic. The awards were made public Oct. 1 in an announcement by Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos.

A total of 349 schools nationwide — 300 public and 49 private — received the honor in 2018.

Of the 49 private schools honored, 44 of them were Catholic institutions, including schools in Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia. Most of the schools are administered by their respective dioceses.

“The coveted National Blue Ribbon Schools award affirms the hard work of educators, families and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging and engaging content,” said the Department of Education in a press release announcing the winners.

The schools will be honored at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. on November 7 and 8.

“We heartily congratulate the 44 Catholic schools that were recently designated 2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools by the United States Department of Education,” Mary Pat Donoghue, Executive Director of the Secretariat for Catholic Education at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, told CNA.

Catholic schools are by their nature “ordered to an integral formation of the human person

which seeks wisdom and virtue through the development of faith and academics,” she said.

“The extraordinary work of these schools demonstrates their commitment to this mission and to the important role that Catholic schools play in American education today.”

“As Catholic schools work toward the common mission of integrating knowledge with faith in the lives of young people, the honor of being named a National Blue Ribbon School reaffirms their excellence and showcases these schools as extraordinary communities,” said National Catholic Educational Association President and CEO Thomas W. Burnford in a press release published on the group’s website.

“It is with great joy that we celebrate and witness these schools’ noteworthy accomplishments.”

Blue Ribbon Schools are either categorized as “Exemplary High Performing Schools,” which means they are among the highest-performing schools in their state on standardized tests, or “Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools,” which are among the highest-performing in a given state at closing achievement gaps between their student body and all students in the state over the past five years.

All of the Catholic schools were recognized by the Department of Education as “Exemplary High Performing Schools.”

Since the Blue Ribbon Schools program began in 1982, over 8,800 schools across all 50 states have been recognized.

CNA Daily News

<https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2018/10/09/vast-majority-of-private-school-blue-ribbon-winners-catholic/>

## **This London Catholic School Uses Its Garden to Feed Homeless**

A Catholic school in London has turned its horticulture lessons into meals for the homeless.

St Gregory's Catholic Science College in northwest London educates nearly 1000 children, aged 11-18. Many of the students volunteer for social and environmental work.

This year, horticulture students grew pumpkins from seed in the summer term and harvested their fruit in early October. The pupils used the pumpkins, along with thyme from their garden, to make soup. They sent that soup to London's Ealing Abbey Soup Kitchen, an ecumenical initiative of service for the city's homeless population.

Ealing Abbey Soup Kitchen has been serving people in need since 1973. The pumpkin-thyme soup provided more than 150 portions.

"I'm really proud of our pupils for sharing the fruits of their labours with those in our community who will benefit the most," the school's headteacher, Andrew Prindiville told the UK's Independent Catholic News website.

The students of St Gregory's have also been recently involved with environmental projects, among them helping to clean nearby Woodcock Park. Wealdstone Brook,

which runs through the park, has had a problem with misconnected water lines dumping waste into the water from some 140 nearby homes.

Thames Water and Friends of Woodcock Park, who worked alongside the students, have been flushing dirty water away from the brook for the past five years. Receiving \$1,300 worth of donated flowers, shrubs, and bulbs, the students and other community volunteers were able to revitalize the landscape.

Earlier this year, St Gregory's Catholic Science College won the Horticultural Society's School Gardening Team of the year award. The school has also been awarded the Eco Schools Green Flag Award for its commitment to the environment as seen in its curriculum.

The school was nominated for the 2018 Sustainable Schools TES AWARD. Headteacher Andy Prindiville said consideration for that award was an incredible honor.

"This is a wonderful accolade for St Gregory's as we are one of only eight schools to have been shortlisted and is the result of the hard work and dedication of the staff, governors, local community and pupils of St Gregory's," said Prindiville, the Harrow Times reported.

CNA Daily News

<https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2018/10/17/this-london-catholic-school-uses-its-garden-to-feed-homeless/>

## Police Arrest Two Girls Who Plotted Satanic Killing at Their Florida School

Police in Florida said two pre-teen girls, who told them they were “Satan worshipers,” brought butcher knives and a pizza cutter to school and told detectives they had been planning to stab more than a dozen students to death.

The middle school students made comments that “they were willing to drink blood and possibly eat flesh,” Bartow, Florida, Police Chief Joe Hall said at a news conference on Wednesday.

They girls, aged 11 and 12, enrolled in sixth and seventh grade, respectively, at Bartow Middle School, were arrested Tuesday, the *Washington Post* reported, The newspaper does not identify juveniles charged with crimes unless they are tried as adults.

Hall said that police had gotten word on Monday that there would be “issues” at the middle school. A student had informed a teacher that “something bad” was going to happen; therefore, extra officers were present on Tuesday. From that point, things intensified:

When the 11-year-old failed to show up for her second period class, her mother received a robo-call notifying her that her daughter was absent, Hall said. The girl’s mother contacted the school and said she believed that her daughter was on campus, prompting administrators to launch a search.

An assistant principal found the two girls hiding in a bathroom with a goblet, Hall said. Suspecting that it might have been used to drink alcohol, she escorted them both to the principal’s office.

When the principal, Christopher Roberts, ordered the 11-year-old to empty her pockets, she handed over a paring knife and a sharpener, Hall said. Asked why she had a

weapon, the girl said that she and the other student were planning on attacking as many students as possible. Officials then searched the 12-year-old and found several other knives and a pizza cutter in her possession. Hall didn’t specify what the pizza cutter’s intended use was.

After being taken into police custody, the girls told detectives that they had wanted to kill at least 15 people and were in the bathroom waiting for an opportunity. They also said they had planned on targeting smaller students whom they could easily overpower, Hall said.

As the investigation continued, police found a hand-drawn map in the 12-year-old’s home of the middle school’s campus that said, “Go to kill in bathroom.” On the students’ phones, officers found that the two had discussed killing themselves after leaving their classmates’ body parts by the school’s entrance. “Thank Satan we are doing this in a bit,” the 12-year-old allegedly wrote in a message over social media on Tuesday.

The Post said the two students are in custody and have been charged with conspiracy to commit murder, possession of a weapon on school property and disrupting a school campus. Prosecutors have not yet indicated whether they will be charged as juveniles or adults. Police believe the students’ parents were unaware of the plot. The news report concluded:

“If you were an adult, you’d be looking at potential life in prison,” Hall said. “In this case, I think the state is going to step in and try to make the best decisions for both the public and the two suspects.”

Hall also noted that “there may be some mental health issues here that have to be addressed.”

Polk County Schools Superintendent Jacqueline Byrd said at Wednesday’s news conference that the district will be filing for expulsion of the students, and that she was

not aware of the two students having any prior disciplinary problems.

Byrd didn’t explain how the students had been able to bring knives onto campus, but credited the district’s safety procedures with thwarting an attack. “The plan worked,” she said.

John Burger

[https://aleteia.org/2018/10/25/police-arrest-two-girls-who-plotted-satanic-killing-at-their-florida-school/?utm\\_campaign=NL\\_en&utm\\_source=daily\\_newsletter&utm\\_medium=mail&utm\\_content=NL\\_en](https://aleteia.org/2018/10/25/police-arrest-two-girls-who-plotted-satanic-killing-at-their-florida-school/?utm_campaign=NL_en&utm_source=daily_newsletter&utm_medium=mail&utm_content=NL_en)

## Nigerian Bishops Urge Child Protection at Education Conference

A “hijacking” of missionary schools by the government is to blame for the failing standards of moral education in Nigeria, according to the country’s Catholic bishops, in a meeting where they also discussed child protection policies in the Church.

Speaking Oct. 16 at the 3rd National Catholic Education Summit in Abuja, Archbishop Augustine Akubueze of Benin City said both schools and homes have failed in imparting the necessary values that should form the bedrock of a morally sound Nigeria.

Christian missionaries established the first schools in Nigeria, and in the 1940s over 90 percent of students educated in the country attended mission schools. Until 1970, the vast majority of Christians - concentrated in the south and east of the country - still attended religious schools.

The military government nationalized the school system after the 1967-1970 Biafran Civil War, when the southeastern part of the country attempted to secede.

The Muslim-dominated military said the nationalization was to fight tribalism in the country, and improve national unity, but the move is still resented by many Christians in the country.

Akubueze, the president of the bishops’ conference, said when mission schools were still in control of education, they produced kids with exemplary moral behavior.

Bishop Peter Odetoyinbo of Abeokuta, the chairman of the bishops’ education committee, also blamed the government for the country’s moral collapse.

“If the truth must be told, the failure of moral education in Nigeria began with the

hijack of missionary schools by the state,” he said.

“That development robbed the Church of its wings and created nuisance out of our schools and we started graduating half-baked graduates,” Odetoyinbo continued.

The theme of the meeting was “Catholic education in Nigeria: Challenges of child protection and human sexuality.”

The bishops came out forcefully against sexual abuse cases perpetuated by some members of the clergy, saying that they constitute an embarrassment to the Church.

“Within our family of faith and our human families, the sins and crimes of sexual abuse of children must no longer be held in secret band in shame. We, bishops, all priests, consecrated men and women and all those who work in Catholic institutions in Nigeria must ensure that there is a safe environment for every child and vulnerable adults,” the bishops said in a statement.

The Nigerian bishops said it was the duty of the Church and of every person to protect children, because they are “a special gift from God.”

Odetoyinbo said priestly chastity is a sure way of protecting children against child predators in the clergy, insisting that chastity is “that spiritual energy capable of defending love from the perils of selfishness and aggressiveness, which cross the thought of every child abuser and intended predator.”

He called for a return to the days when community members considered every child precious and so cared for them.

“Even when parents were not exposed and did not teach the children about sexuality, the society took care of that because of the high regard and respect for religious and

societal values. Today, the general rot in the entire system has robbed the children of that guidance and are ill-informed, and unable to provide any solution to these problems,” Odetoynbo said.

The bishop said the Church must remain the moral force to which many parents turn for a solution.

“This is why the welfare of the child is the first and paramount thing to be considered as derived from the Gospel,” he explained, adding there was need to create an environment in which children can develop and be safe.

In his speech, the chairman of the Catholic education summit, Dr. Obiora Okonkwo, said the breakdown in morality in Nigeria was a result not only of the failure of the educational system, but also of the inordinate use of social media.

“Unarguably, a greater percentage of human sexuality education was learnt, neither at

home nor school, but through social media. For us to return to the path of rectitude, we must launch a new soul-search. We must search our minds to know if we are teaching our children right and in accordance with the mandate of the Church.”

He said for Nigeria to return to its core values, churches need to once more take control of their schools to “continue the societal transformation they began a few decades ago.”

Okonkwo said that could be an essential first step towards “recreating the society and building human beings that we could proudly defend.”

“It will go a long way in helping us address the moral decadence that has led to a high rate of criminality, including stealing and embezzlement of public funds in our society,” he said.

Crux Staff

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-africa/2018/10/29/nigerian-bishops-urge-child-protection-at-education-conference/>

## A Dark Consensus about Screens and Kids Begins to Emerge in Silicon Valley

The people who are closest to a thing are often the most wary of it. Technologists know how phones really work, and many have decided they don't want their own children anywhere near them.

A wariness that has been slowly brewing is turning into a regionwide consensus: The benefits of screens as a learning tool are overblown, and the risks for addiction and stunting development seem high. The debate in Silicon Valley now is about how much exposure to phones is O.K.

"Doing no screen time is almost easier than doing a little," said Kristin Stecher, a former social computing researcher married to a Facebook engineer. "If my kids do get it at all, they just want it more."

Ms. Stecher, 37, and her husband, Rushabh Doshi, researched screen time and came to a simple conclusion: they wanted almost none of it in their house. Their daughters, ages 5 and 3, have no screen time "budget," no regular hours they are allowed to be on screens. The only time a screen can be used is during the travel portion of a long car ride (the four-hour drive to Tahoe counts) or during a plane trip.

Recently she has softened this approach. Every Friday evening the family watches one movie.

There is a looming issue Ms. Stecher sees in the future: Her husband, who is 39, loves video games and thinks they can be educational and entertaining. She does not.

"We'll cross that when we come to it," said Ms. Stecher, who is due soon with a boy. Some of the people who built video programs are now horrified by how many places a child can now watch a video.

Asked about limiting screen time for children, Hunter Walk, a venture capitalist who for years directed product for YouTube at Google, sent a photo of a potty training toilet with an iPad attached and wrote: "Hashtag 'products we didn't buy.'"

Athena Chavarria, who worked as an executive assistant at Facebook and is now at Mark Zuckerberg's philanthropic arm, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, said: "I am convinced the devil lives in our phones and is wreaking havoc on our children."

Ms. Chavarria did not let her children have cellphones until high school, and even now bans phone use in the car and severely limits it at home.

She said she lives by the mantra that the last child in the class to get a phone wins. Her daughter did not get a phone until she started ninth grade.

"Other parents are like, 'Aren't you worried you don't know where your kids are when you can't find them?'" Ms. Chavarria said. "And I'm like, 'No, I do not need to know where my kids are every second of the day.'"

For longtime tech leaders, watching how the tools they built affect their children has felt like a reckoning on their life and work.

Among those is Chris Anderson, the former editor of Wired and now the chief executive of a robotics and drone company. He is also the founder of GeekDad.com.

"On the scale between candy and crack cocaine, it's closer to crack cocaine," Mr. Anderson said of screens.

Technologists building these products and writers observing the tech revolution were naïve, he said.

“We thought we could control it,” Mr. Anderson said. “And this is beyond our power to control. This is going straight to the pleasure centers of the developing brain. This is beyond our capacity as regular parents to understand.”

He has five children and 12 tech rules. They include: no phones until the summer before high school, no screens in bedrooms, network-level content blocking, no social media until age 13, no iPads at all and screen time schedules enforced by Google Wifi that he controls from his phone. Bad behavior? The child goes offline for 24 hours.

“I didn’t know what we were doing to their brains until I started to observe the symptoms and the consequences,” Mr. Anderson said.

“This is scar tissue talking. We’ve made every mistake in the book, and I think we got it wrong with some of my kids,” Mr. Anderson said. “We glimpsed into the chasm of addiction, and there were some lost years, which we feel bad about.”

His children attended private elementary school, where he saw the administration introduce iPads and smart whiteboards, only to “descend into chaos and then pull back from it all.”

This idea that Silicon Valley parents are wary about tech is not new. The godfathers of tech expressed these concerns years ago, and concern has been loudest from the top.

Tim Cook, the C.E.O. of Apple, said earlier this year that he would not let his nephew join social networks. Bill Gates banned cellphones until his children were teenagers,

and Melinda Gates wrote that she wished they had waited even longer. Steve Jobs would not let his young children near iPads.

But in the last year, a fleet of high-profile Silicon Valley defectors have been sounding alarms in increasingly dire terms about what these gadgets do to the human brain. Suddenly rank-and-file Silicon Valley workers are obsessed. No-tech homes are cropping up across the region. Nannies are being asked to sign no-phone contracts.

Those who have exposed their children to screens try to talk them out of addiction by explaining how the tech works.

John Lilly, a Silicon Valley-based venture capitalist with Greylock Partners and the former C.E.O. of Mozilla, said he tries to help his 13-year-old son understand that he is being manipulated by those who built the technology.

“I try to tell him somebody wrote code to make you feel this way – I’m trying to help him understand how things are made, the values that are going into things and what people are doing to create that feeling,” Mr. Lilly said. “And he’s like, ‘I just want to spend my 20 bucks to get my Fortnite skins.’”

And there are those in tech who disagree that screens are dangerous. Jason Toff, 32, who ran the video platform Vine and now works for Google, lets his 3-year-old play on an iPad, which he believes is no better or worse than a book. This opinion is unpopular enough with his fellow tech workers that he feels there is now “a stigma.”

“One reaction I got just yesterday was, ‘Doesn’t it worry you that all the major tech execs are limiting screen time?’” Mr. Toff said. “And I was like, ‘Maybe it should, but

I guess I've always been skeptical of norms.' People are just scared of the unknown."

"It's contrarian," Mr. Toff said. "But I feel like I'm speaking for a lot of parents that are afraid of speaking out loud for fear of judgment."

He said he thinks back to his own childhood growing up watching a lot of TV. "I think I turned out O.K.," Mr. Toff said.

Other Silicon Valley parents say there are ways to make some limited screen time slightly less toxic.

Renee DiResta, a security researcher on the board of the Center for Humane Tech, won't allow passive screen time, but will allow short amounts of time on challenging games. She wants her 2- and 4-year-old children to learn how to code young, so she embraces their awareness of gadgets. But she distinguishes between these types of screen

Nellie Bowles

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/26/style/phones-children-silicon-valley.html>

use. Playing a building game is allowed, but watching a YouTube video is not, unless it is as a family.

And Frank Barbieri, a San Francisco-based executive at the start-up PebblePost that tracks online activity to send direct mail advertising, tries to limit his 5-year-old daughter's screen time to Italian language content.

"We have friends who are screen abolitionists, and we have friends who are screen liberalists," Mr. Barbieri said.

He had read studies on how learning a second language at a young age is good for the developing mind, so his daughter watches Italian-language movies and TV shows.

"For us, honestly, me and my wife were like, 'Where would we like to visit?'" Mr. Barbieri said.

## Gender Ideologues Threaten Alberta's Christian Schools

Canada has suffered an unreported revolution. In times past, revolutionaries first seized the radio stations, dominating the public narrative. Today, in the Age of Public Administration, they seize the faculties of education. Their “long march” through the Canadian schools has taken fifty years, but today, their dominion seems unchallenged.

In September, Alberta's provincial Department of Education warned sixty private Christian schools that they are in violation of the “Safe and Caring Schools” policy issued in 2016. The government threatened the schools with “suspension or cancellation of accreditation,” unless they remove these “unwelcoming, uncaring and/or disrespectful” words from their manuals:

- “We believe men and women were created in the image of God ... and therefore have transcendent, intrinsic worth.”
- “Parents are the primary educators...”
- “The unchangeable and infallible truth of the Word of God...”
- “God created mankind as male and female, equal in dignity and worth...”
- “God's institution of marriage, a covenant between one man and one woman...”
- “Obedience to God's law supersedes subjection to human authority”
- “The above doctrines will be taught as truth in our school...”

The list continues for well over dozen proscribed locutions, denying Christian schools the right to teach Christian beliefs about sexuality and non-negotiable reality.

The free-speech advocate Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms then requested

clarification, how phrases like “men and women . . . have transcendent, intrinsic worth,” might be “unwelcoming, uncaring and/or disrespectful.” The government replied that the wording was deemed inadmissible solely “in the opinion of the Minister” – socialist Education Minister David Eggen, a committed proponent of pre-pubescent children's sexual rights.

Across Canada, “LGBTQ” infiltration of the education establishment is almost complete. In early 2013, the Ontario Education Department rolled out a sex-ed curriculum, teaching homosexuality in Grade 3, masturbation in Grade 6, and oral and anal sex in Grade 7. That summer, the same senior bureaucrat who crafted that curriculum, Deputy Minister of Education Ben Levin, was arrested for making and distributing child-pornography, and online grooming of a minor. At his trial, a psychiatrist testified to Levin's sadomasochist tendencies. Yet the influential bureaucrat was released after serving just 19 months of a three-year sentence. In the provincial legislature, when a Conservative member tried to “connect the dots” between the LGBTQ sex-ed curriculum and its grooming author, he was shouted down as “homophobic.”

Alberta education ministry's assault on Christian schools is just the latest in its campaign to impose “Gay-Straight Alliances” – LGBTQ clubs – on the province's schools. GSAs were first crafted in 2015 by a collapsing Conservative government, ducking a contentious election issue and selling them as an anti-bullying measure. The Catholic “Separate Schools” in the three Prairie Provinces are constitutionally-protected, but the Alberta bishops' initial resistance sparked a media firestorm – “Catholics condemn gays and lesbians to hell,” cried the *Edmonton*

*Journal.* And the Conservatives made conciliatory noises, so one bishop finally conceded, “We can work with it.” Then the Conservatives lost the election. Their successors, the socialist New Democrats, saw an historic opportunity and joined forces with gender activists, already deeply entrenched in the academic-governmental education establishment.

Within months, Alberta’s education minister ramped up GSA websites, linked to gay porn sites, and the media largely ignored the few parents who noticed. Eggen issued “best practices” for transgendered students, mandating “self-identification” as the sole criterion in locker room choices. The principal of a rural Catholic school was suspended for starting a generic “anti-bullying” club, rather than a gay club. Meanwhile, the teachers of an autistic 14-year-old girl encouraged her to “transition” to boyhood, and then informed her parents six months later, only after she became suicidal. When the new Conservative leader Jason Kenney suggested families be informed in such cases, Eggen accused him of wanting to “out LGBTQ students to their parents, and that’s dangerous.” The generally childless media agreed.

The Catholic bishops argued for a compromise, a generic anti-bullying program that wouldn’t teach oral and anal sex to children. One Catholic trustee says they were promised concessions in private meetings. But the government later demanded unconditional surrender. In October 2017, Premier Rachel Notley ruled that Catholic moral teaching is “denying science” and “endangering children.” Eggen called the Catholic position, “completely unacceptable.” And in November 2017, the NDP passed Bill C-24, “An Act to Support Gay-Straight Alliances.”

The new law forbids teachers from telling parents anything about their children’s

gender education. Teachers are forbidden from telling parents when their children join a GSA. They are forbidden from telling parents whatever outside “advisors” or “resources” are brought into GSA’s. They are forbidden from telling parents when their children are “supported” in the decision to transition to another sex. The unstated premise: only teachers, not parents, can be trusted to raise children to sexual maturity, or what passes for it.

Within the Catholic system (a quarter of the province’s students), the culture has already transitioned. A daughter’s friend attends grade 11 in a publicly-funded separate school, and she likes the school. But...“there are some washrooms you don’t go into at noon.” The principal enforces a strict policy against fondling, but only with heterosexual students. “He’s scared to say anything to two girls or two guys,” she says, so same-sex couples are free to make-out in the stalls.

Education is a provincial jurisdiction in Canada, so the revolution spread at different rates. Mainly rural Saskatchewan has so far resisted GSA’s, but British Columbia has stripped parents of the right to remove their kids from the classroom. Both Quebec and Newfoundland voted to disestablish their Catholic schools twenty years ago, so their churches are out of play.

This summer, Ontario (with 40 percent of Canada’s population) elected a new Conservative government, partly on the promise to repeal their sex-ed curriculum, but its teachers’ unions – including the Catholic OECTA – say they’ll teach whatever they want. “We must meet curriculum expectations,” one teacher blogged, “but nothing says we can’t EXCEED them.” Lawyers are backing two “transgendered” teens, demanding the LGBTQ curriculum, and it’s not clear the

new government can stomach a fight. The clerks are declaring sovereignty.

### ***Intellectual Roots of the Education Revolution***

The revolution took fifty years. In the 1960s, the Education faculties drifted into the religion of liberation, as Paulo Freire (Pedagogy of the Oppressed) and Ivan Illich (Deschooling Society) prophesied that Noble Little Savages need only to be freed from social norms (good habits) and economic categories (useful skills). In the 1970s, Herbert Marcuse's Eros and Civilization proved that real oppression is sexual: "over-determination" by the one-two punch of family and class, sex and property. The spectacularly shallow Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida then deconstructed conventional sanity and heterosexuality as symptoms of political power. The promise of sexual liberation awoke the Prometheus in the souls of timid educators. By the 1990s, liberationists held the university Ed Psych and Ed Foundations departments, crushing dissent and igniting new sex-ed controversies. Now, the hetero-Mensheviks have acceded to the homo-Bolsheviks, since obsessive compulsion always trumps mere vice.

Gender ideology – the sexualization of children – is the End Game, for most of the revolution's carnage was inflicted before its LGBTQ-ization, in two generations of historical idiocy and sanctimonious egocentricity. The fundamental calamity was the rise of a lunatic theory of human happiness: happiness as enflaming our most powerful passions. Many have lived this way, but in 2,500 years of human reflection, no one ever seriously proposed such a delusionary, self-destructive theory of happiness as the purpose of our public institutions – not until Marcuse, Foucault, and Derrida. Today, lunacy dominates the faculties of education and public discourse,

codifying a societal disaster. It is as if drunkards came to believe, on the authority of the medical associations, universities, and social services, that alcoholism is their fundamental "identity" and Navy Rum their necessary nutrition.

This beggars de Tocqueville's worst nightmare. Since the dawn of history, the world has understood that happiness arises out of friendship, and friendship out of self-sacrifice, mutual dedication and the necessary self-control of our anarchic impulses and appetites. But the managerial state has an unerring instinct and appetite for dependency cohorts, "clients" defined and cultivated by arrested development. In fact, ordinary homosexuals (2.5 percent) and transgendered (0.6 percent) are the victims, but of neo-Marxist clerks, gay and straight, selling a self-defeating anthropology. Gender radicals today claim their compulsion as their identity, and their exhibitionism as happiness. The misery is in the programmatic narcissism.

### ***The Church's Anemic Response***

Hindsight is 20/20, but it is highly regrettable that, for 50 years, the Catholic Church in Canada failed to teach its science of happiness in the pews, a serious sin of omission. The Church started colluding with the culture in the 1970s, when pastors failed to tackle youthful fornication from the pulpit, for fear of alienating indulgent parents. Yet, the revolution's end-game lunacy has proven the sanity of the Church's natural anthropology. All the epidemics of a collapsing civilization – fatherlessness, child poverty, promiscuity, self-wounding ("cutting"), gender dysphoria, addiction, neuroses, suicide – arise from collapsing families. The Church has science on its side – see *The New Atlantis* review cited below. Yet Minister Eggen endorses gender ideology as "settled science," and no one objects.

The Canadian Church hid behind religious freedom. Yielding on the anthropology – the argument from nature – the Church left work-a-day Catholics in a state of unconscious Averroism, trying to live “Two Truths,” Revelation versus Science. So when the 14-year-old daughter of our casually-Catholic neighbor declared herself lesbian on Facebook – true story – they had to affirm her “identity.” No priest ever told them that there’s no scientific evidence for innate “gender identities,” distinct from biological sex, as *The New Atlantis* report documents. No priest ever mentioned that 50 to 80 percent of adolescents with same-sex attractions, when they mature as young adults, experience only opposite-sex attractions (Arch Sex Behv43/3). No priest ever warned that choosing a lesbian life would render their daughter two-to-three times more likely to suffer mood disorders, substance abuse, domestic abuse, depression and suicide (BMC Psychiatry 8: 70). No-one else wanted to tell them, and the Church didn’t dare.

The Church’s failure to teach natural sexuality in its parishes was not only a crime; it was a blunder. The real issue is natural happiness, but with liberation ideology unchallenged on the science, the narrative degenerated in the media. Once the science was conceded, religious freedom became only the right to be wrong. Jehovah’s Witnesses show how well that works; they can refuse blood transfusions religiously, but they have no right to harm their kids that way. Likewise, adult Catholics may suppress their sexual identities, but they have no right to harm their kids. Invoking “science,” the state steps in.

Short term, GSA groomers will pick the low hanging fruit, fragile kids from unstable

Joseph Woodard

families, damaging them further. Psychologists have forgotten the once-treasured “sexual latency period,” from late-toddlerhood to adolescence, when a child’s brain is designed to absorb reading, writing, arithmetic, music, history, science and poetry – if undisturbed by untimely sexual stimulation. Such intellectual flowering is the real hope for troubled kids. The West’s intellectual preeminence into the twentieth century arose partly from Christianity’s seriousness in preserving childhood innocence, and single-sex classrooms prove the intellectual benefits. But now, sexualizing troubled kids will magnify all those problems caused by the pedagogy of self-esteem.

Will the gender narrative unravel? The Jordan Peterson phenomenon and Ontario election suggest it might. The gender autocracy is so heavy-handed, even Canadians may take notice. Another election looms in six months, and prayers rise up. Yet tenured revolutionaries will still occupy the bureaucracy and education faculties.

Stuart Wachowicz, the sane former Director of Curriculum for Edmonton Public Schools, says education faculties have become so corrupt, “worshipping the religion of diversity,” they cannot be reformed. The only solution for any courageous government would be to sidestep the four-year B.Ed. union-ticket, by reinstating the old one-year teaching certificate, offered in community colleges after a real B.A. or B.Sc. The experts would howl, claiming only they can mold other people’s children. But an audacious government would reply that social engineering is the enemy of real diversity. A “return to basics” would let “a thousand flowers bloom.”

<https://www.crisismagazine.com/2018/gender-ideologues-threaten-albertas-christian-schools>

## Catholic Schools in Australia to Receive Funding Increase

Catholic schools in Australia have secured an increase in funding from the government following an outcry from Catholic leaders, but some Australians have been questioning the Church's tactics in securing the funding.

In July, the socioeconomic status review board in Australia announced changes to their methodology to measure more precisely parents' capacity to pay for schools. The new methodology would use parents' tax information rather than geographical census data.

This new model could lead to a \$74 million a year funding increase for Catholic schools from 2020 onward.

This model replaces a controversial 2017 funding model put forth by then-education minister Simon Birmingham. He delivered a funding package in that would end special deals and create one funding system for all schools, public and private, *The Guardian* reported. That model would have resulted in funding increases for schools in some areas, but in others, such as the Australian Capital Territory, it would have decreased funding by nearly two percent.

Catholic leaders, including Archbishop Peter Comensoli of Melbourne, reportedly objected to the funding plan at the time, and parents in several districts holding elections received warnings in the mail of possible fee increases and school closures. Several members of the Australian Labor party expressed worry that any cuts to Catholic education would cost them votes in their districts.

The Catholic Education Commission in the state of Victoria campaigned for the Labor

Party in at least one district, after the party pledged to increase Catholic school funding. Stephen Elder, the head of the commission, said that the lobbying was needed because 750,000 Catholic school students nationwide were likely to have to pay higher fees, and some schools faced closure.

Australia elected Scott Morrison, a member of the Liberal Party, as Prime Minister in August, and he replaced education minister Simon Birmingham with Dan Tehan.

Morrison then delivered a new school funding package in September that includes \$3.2 billion to fund non-government schools over the next decade. It also includes a \$1.2 billion "choice and affordability fund," only for independent and Catholic schools, to support rural and drought-affected schools and other schools that require extra aid.

An Australian public policy think tank released analysis suggesting that the \$1.2 billion was more than enough to cover fee increases for low-income parents. The National Catholic Education Commission gave its full support to the new funding package.

Morrison stressed the importance of school choice, while also reiterating a commitment to government schools, which will receive increased funding, from \$7.3 billion this year to \$13.7 billion in 2029.

According to the National Catholic Education Commission, one in five Australian students attends a Catholic school, for a total of some 765,000 students in 1,741 schools.

<https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2018/11/07/catholic-schools-in-australia-to-receive-funding-increase/>

## How Do We Teach Our Teachers to Nurture the Whole Student?

*Real education is about more than the transmission of information.*

Joseph Addison, the English essayist, poet and playwright, said: “What a sculpture is to a block of marble, education is to the human soul.”

The quality of education that our children are offered is a hot topic today. Which means the pressure is on, especially for the professionals who are actually in charge of educating teachers.

A quality educational model isn't just about a solid academic education for each age group. It must also emphasize the development of skills that helps students to cope confidently with different aspects of their lives: personal, social, working, and family.

### *The specific skills every teacher needs*

Let's look at some of the multi-faceted skills that should characterize the profile of a teacher. Formation is a life-long endeavor, of course.

**Teamwork:** Teamwork is not just being able to work with others, but participating in team meetings, which requires knowing how to listen and how to speak in a timely manner with positive and constructive contributions.

**The ability to communicate:** You need to be able to express yourself clearly in writing and in conversations or debates, with a style and language appropriate for the person you're talking to, and be able to speak effectively in public. In an educational context, it's important to know how to remain silent at the right moments and be able to listen to and understand the messages and needs of your environment.

**Emotional Intelligence:** A good teacher is always growing in self-knowledge and self-esteem, developing the ability to be assertive, that is, to be positive, avoiding reactions such as submission or aggression, without adopting defensive or violent attitudes, and promoting flexibility to adapt to new situations that can be found in any circumstance of life.

**Interpersonal skills:** Teachers must know how to listen to and respect the opinions of others and be able to make themselves understood with ease, with particular attention when the student has a different cultural background, taking into account factors such as ethnicity or religion.

**Leadership:** A teacher is a leader of their group, and must possess the knowledge of the characteristics of a leader and the styles of leadership, especially in the context of education.

**Problem solving and critical reasoning:** Teachers must development the ability to provide solutions to problems in the field of education: knowing the most common situations, knowing how to clarify the problem, analyzing the causes, and identifying alternative solutions.

**Planning and organization of time:** Efficient distribution of time is vital. Teachers need to be able to order activities or tasks to be done according to the importance attributed to them, as well as prioritize demands, establish deadlines, and organize schedules so as to perform their tasks without wasting time.

**Autonomous learning:** Teachers need to have, and infuse in their students, a sense of responsibility towards their own life with the

aim of learning to seek and evaluate information, as well as analyzing, synthesizing, summarizing, communicating, citing, and presenting works always from the perspective of good management of their own ongoing personal development.

Javier Fiz Pérez

[https://aleteia.org/2018/11/09/how-do-we-teach-our-teachers-to-nurture-the-whole-student/?utm\\_campaign=NL\\_en&utm\\_source=daily\\_newsletter&utm\\_medium=mail&utm\\_content=NL\\_en](https://aleteia.org/2018/11/09/how-do-we-teach-our-teachers-to-nurture-the-whole-student/?utm_campaign=NL_en&utm_source=daily_newsletter&utm_medium=mail&utm_content=NL_en)

The education of teachers is a social priority for those who are aware of the fact that the future of our society is being planted today in the education of our children in schools.

## NFL's Philip Rivers Inspires All with Latin Phrase

*"Nunc Coepi" is a term of renewal.*

The Quarterback of the Los Angeles Chargers has been carrying a Latin phrase with him for a while now. It's embroidered on his hats, he's been saying it in press conferences, and he even made T-shirts for the whole team. Now, in an interview with ESPN, he discusses what it means to him.

"Nunc Coepi" is Latin for "Now I begin," a sentiment Rivers says is akin to the cheer "Let's Go!" that is so often put up on the stadium big screen during a pivotal third down. "You always hear 'let's go!' It's another way that triggers 'begin again,'" Rivers said.

The 36-year-old QB, a devout Catholic husband and father to seven children, told ESPN that he was taught the phrase. "A priest friend of ours gave me that phrase years ago ... it's that never-ending begin," he said.

Rivers believes that the Latin is particularly suited to the life of a quarterback, who must

"begin again" after each possession of the ball.

"As a quarterback, it's play-to-play. You're always starting again, whether it's good or bad ... If you ask any of my children at home, 'What's dad's favorite phrase?' They would be right on it."

In 2014, Rivers gave the commencement speech at the Catholic University of America. There, from the steps of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, he explained the phrase's meaning to the graduating class as well.

The Chargers are sitting pretty at 7-2 on the season. While this is no guarantee of a playoff run, as the Kansas City Chiefs own the AFC West division at 9-1, Rivers has a very good chance of clinching the wild card spot. If he does, we're sure he'll be ready to "begin again" in the post season.

J-P Mauro

[https://aleteia.org/2018/11/13/nfls-philip-rivers-inspires-all-with-latin-phrase/?utm\\_campaign=NL\\_en&utm\\_source=daily\\_newsletter&utm\\_medium=mail&utm\\_content=NL\\_en](https://aleteia.org/2018/11/13/nfls-philip-rivers-inspires-all-with-latin-phrase/?utm_campaign=NL_en&utm_source=daily_newsletter&utm_medium=mail&utm_content=NL_en)

## Excelsior! The Fascinating Story behind Stan Lee's Latin Catchphrase

*What started as a joke, became the motto of his life.*

Stan Lee was a legend in the comic book industry, co-creating such superheroes as Spider-Man, the Hulk, Doctor Strange, the Fantastic Four, Daredevil, Black Panther and the X-Men to name a few. He was also instrumental to the recent success of Marvel movies and the resurgence of comic books in pop-culture.

Upon his death on November 12, his Twitter page recalled a word that he used throughout his life: Excelsior!

The Latin word means “ever upward” or “still higher” and he began using it in the 1960s as a sign-off for his columns he wrote. Initially this was used to confuse his competition, as he explained to io9.

I used to have a lot of expressions that I would end my comic book columns with: Hang Loose, Face Front, ‘Nuff Said, and I found that the competition was always imitating them and using them. So, I said I’m going to get one expression that they’re not going to know what it means, and they won’t know how to spell it. And that’s where excelsior came from, and they never did take up on it, thank goodness.

However, it soon became a motto in the life of Stan Lee and frequently shouted it at comic book conventions. He expanded on the word in a Tweet in 2010 and said, “Finally, what does ‘Excelsior’ mean? ‘Upward and onward to greater glory!’ That’s what I wish you whenever I finish tweeting! Excelsior!”

Stan Lee grew-up in a Jewish family and wasn’t a religious man, but he did have a respect for the Bible and a keen interest in Catholicism, as can be seen by the many

Marvel superheroes he created with a Catholic background.

Yet, it was likely that Lee first saw the word in the New York state motto, which was voted as part of the state’s coat of arms in 1778. In this context the word is focused primarily on the temporal accomplishments of humanity, with the desire to go “ever upward” in achievements.

From a Catholic perspective, the word and similar variants have a distinct reference to God and the afterlife. Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati used a similar Italian phrase, “verso l’alto,” which means “toward the top.” For him it represented the desire to aim towards the height of sanctity, reaching for the summit of eternal life.

Similarly, the Society of Jesus has as their motto the Latin phrase “Ad maiorem Dei gloriam,” which means “For the greater glory of God.” This means that all things should be done for God’s greater glory, not seeking earthly achievements, but heavenly grace. It’s interesting to note how Stan Lee described “Excelsior” as “Upward and onward to greater glory!” While he likely meant earthly glory, it is easy to adapt the phrase to the greater glory of Heaven.

Catholics are also familiar with the word, as a form of it appears in the “Gloria,” a hymn that has been sung for many centuries. It quotes the biblical words of the angels on Christmas Day, who said, “Glory to God in the Highest” (Gloria in excelsis Deo).

While Lee’s Latin catchphrase began as a joke to rile his competition, it became a motto that brought out the best in people he worked with and challenged them to go “ever upward.”

For Catholics, that is a worthy motto, one that can drive a person to new heights in the

spiritual life, propelling them to the glory of Heaven.

Philip Kosloski

[https://aleteia.org/2018/11/13/excelsior-the-fascinating-story-behind-stan-lees-latin-catchphrase/?utm\\_campaign=NL\\_en&utm\\_source=daily\\_newsletter&utm\\_medium=mail&utm\\_content=NL\\_en](https://aleteia.org/2018/11/13/excelsior-the-fascinating-story-behind-stan-lees-latin-catchphrase/?utm_campaign=NL_en&utm_source=daily_newsletter&utm_medium=mail&utm_content=NL_en)

## Harvard Professor Encourages Us to Change Our View of Achievement and Success

*The "dark horse" approach challenges all of us, especially parents, to focus on personal talents and unique gifts.*

All parents want to see their children succeed. We want our children to be happy, healthy and doing what they were meant to do with their lives. But just what, exactly does success look like?

The world often views success as a very narrow ideal – college degree, good job, big house, early retirement and a yearly Christmas card full of smiling faces enjoying a year of vacations, soccer practices and good vibes.

As Christians, we know that success doesn't always look like this. Jesus had none of those things and his very life was considered the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the entire world. A successful life lived by a Christian is one marked by something very different than just material accumulation or worldly achievements. Christians are led by the desire to do something purposeful for God, to live out our fullest potential and do just what He created us to do – whether that means making art, solving complex mathematical equations, curing disease, or running your own company with excellence, justice and passion. For many of us, though, we have no idea where to start to find our highest calling and live according to our fullest potential.

Harvard's Todd Rose, author of a new book called *Dark Horse: Achieving Success through the Pursuit of Fulfillment*, believes he can teach us how. His view of success doesn't necessarily include Ivy League diplomas or 401Ks – rather, it's about accomplishing things that truly matter to each individual, and about being excellent and fulfilled in whatever we choose to pursue. Rather than using a one-size-fits-all,

traditional approach that pushes children to succeed in only the "right" things like good grades, college degrees and stable jobs, Rose believes that parents can help children succeed in a more meaningful and fulfilling way by capitalizing on our uniqueness and pursuit of personal satisfaction.

So just how, exactly, can we teach our kids to "follow their dreams," and live out the fullest life that God has called them to, while still encouraging them to be hard-working and excellent at whatever they choose to do? How exactly can we inspire them towards a "Dark Horse" mentality where the end goal isn't the money, rewards or accomplishments but the work itself?

I interviewed Mr. Rose about his theory and new book – his expert tips are below.

### ***Get to Know Them***

Rose says that the "dark horse" mindset begins with an understanding of what truly motivates each person. According to Rose, "we can help our children discover this, and it starts with simply asking them. That sounds simple, but how often do we really ask our kids what matters to them and why? We spend more time telling them what they should care about than we do helping them discover it for themselves. That means not simply asking "How was school?" or "How was soccer?" but "What do you like about these things? And why? Our children need to have this kind of self-knowledge if they want to live a fulfilling life."

### ***Measure Success Differently***

Our preconceived notions of success may not fit what our children actually desire from their own lives, and that's probably for the best. Rose says that "success is about accomplishing things that truly matter to you – it is about being excellent and fulfilled. It is always personal (what really matters to me may not matter to anyone else), and it is never comparative (simply being better than someone else does not make you successful). From years of studying people who pursue fulfillment over conventional notions of success, the things that stand out to me are how happy they are, how confident they are in themselves, and how much of desire they have to want other people to feel the way they do."

### ***Focus on What Matters to Them***

Maybe your kid is really into horseback riding, astronomy, kayaking or baking – encourage their passions, even if you can't quite see how they might lead to your notion of "success." None of these hobbies are your typical violin lessons or math tutoring of "Tiger Mom" calendar, but they're valuable if your child finds meaning in them. According to Rose, "the dark horse mindset is about taking your own individuality seriously, and learning how to harness that

Ashley Jonkman

[https://aleteia.org/2018/11/18/harvard-professor-encourages-us-to-change-our-view-of-achievement-and-success/?utm\\_campaign=NL\\_en&utm\\_source=daily\\_newsletter&utm\\_medium=mail&utm\\_content=NL\\_en](https://aleteia.org/2018/11/18/harvard-professor-encourages-us-to-change-our-view-of-achievement-and-success/?utm_campaign=NL_en&utm_source=daily_newsletter&utm_medium=mail&utm_content=NL_en)

to pursue fulfillment and achieve success. I believe it is something that is available to anyone, no matter where you are starting from, how old you are, or what you are striving to accomplish. Dark horses think about this differently: they focus on what matters to them, what truly motivates them, and build their identity off of that."

### ***Consider the Benefits***

Still not convinced that allowing or even encouraging the "dark horse" mentality is right for you and your family? We all know people who were driven into medicine, engineering, law or other fields by well-meaning parents, who don't actually love their professions (and may even hate their jobs!). In addition to having children who grow up to be adults who thrive in and enjoy their passions, Rose "believe[s] that we will have a more thriving society because people will be more engaged in what they do. The research is clear that engagement leads to greater productivity and creativity. Second, and most important, I would expect to see greater happiness and harmony, since if we are teaching our children to focus on getting better at things that matter to them, instead of trying to be better than the kid sitting next to them, [they will] no longer have to see each other as competitors."

## **Diocese of Sacramento Offers Free Schooling For Students Displaced by Camp Fire**

The Diocese of Sacramento is offering free tuition to its more than three dozen private Catholic schools to students displaced by the fires in Northern California.

Officials say all education costs associated with the school will be at no expense

Gray Hall, ABC Action News

<https://6abc.com/society/diocese-of-sacramento-offers-free-schooling-for-students-displaced-by-camp-fire/4752378/?sf202944337=1>

through the remainder of the school year. That includes tuition, which usually costs between five and six thousand dollars.

Students will also receive uniforms, school materials, hot lunches and all other expenses.

## **Trump Praises ‘Very Special’ Nuns Who Sang for Him at National Christmas Tree Lighting**

President Donald Trump praised the group of religious sisters he invited to sing at the National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony Wednesday.

The Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist sang “Carol of the Bells” before a large crowd including President Trump and First Lady Melania Trump. The nuns were dressed in white habits and black coats; their long black veils fluttered in the November wind.

“Carol of the Bells” is featured on the most recent recording produced by the youthful order, *Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring: Christmas with The Dominican Sisters of Mary*. Bucking the trend of many orders of women religious, the 120 woman strong Ann Arbor Dominicans have 14 novices and welcomed 13 new postulants to their community this past August. The faithful sisters teach in Catholic schools around the U.S.

The tree lighting ceremony took place after 4:30 p.m. on Thursday at the Ellipse on President’s Park, just south of the White House. The tradition is an annual event, dating back 96 years. President Trump and Melania Trump appeared on stage to light the National Christmas Tree – Melania

pushed the button – and to wish the crowd a “Merry Christmas.”

Trump was introduced as “the man who brought Christmas back to America.”

Although there were many performers, Trump singled out the Sisters in particular.

“That was a great job tonight,” he said. “And this included one very special group that has topped Billboard charts multiple times, the Dominican Sisters, who I met backstage, from Ann Arbor, Michigan.”

On November 27, the Sisters stated on their website that they were excited to bring “Christ to the Capitol.”

“As our four founding Sisters stepped out in faith 21 years ago to begin a new community of women religious, they envisioned spreading the witness of religious life across the country,” they wrote. “Indeed, God has affirmed their act of faith by providing abundant opportunities to fulfill that vision. In a spirit of thanksgiving, we are excited to bring ‘Christ to the Capitol’ as our Sisters sing selections from our latest CD, *Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring*, at the White House for the 96th Annual National Christmas Tree Lighting on November 28!”

Dorothy Cummings McLean

[https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/trump-praises-very-special-nuns-who-sang-for-him-at-national-christmas-tree?utm\\_source=LifeSiteNews.com&utm\\_campaign=974e22e4a1-Catholic\\_11\\_29\\_2018&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_12387f0e3e-974e22e4a1-404028405](https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/trump-praises-very-special-nuns-who-sang-for-him-at-national-christmas-tree?utm_source=LifeSiteNews.com&utm_campaign=974e22e4a1-Catholic_11_29_2018&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_12387f0e3e-974e22e4a1-404028405)

## Shakespeare Poem Found to Have Pro-Catholic Coded Messages

*Early work contained references interpreted as decrying Catholic persecution.*

One could argue that no playwright has had as big an impact on the English language as Shakespeare. His extensive catalogue remains a treasured source of inspiration, and while many modern English speakers have never attended one of his plays, they may find themselves quoting from his extensive works. Now it is being claimed that the Bard, who had previously been thought of as apolitical, was really a staunch supporter of the rights of Catholics.

Clare Asquith, the Countess of Oxford and Asquith, has made a study of his early poem *The Rape of Lucrece*, a 2,000-line epic that seems to be neither about the rape of a Roman noblewoman nor really a poem. Asquith believes that it is, in fact, a political pamphlet that sides against England's persecution of the Catholic population.

Through diligent study of the work, Clare has reinterpreted *The Rape of Lucrece* as an account of the 1534 Act of Supremacy – the edict that established King Henry VIII of England and subsequent monarchs as the supreme heads of the Church of England – and the subsequent destruction of old Catholic England.

In the poem, Lucrece, wife of Collatine, was raped by Tarquin, the son of the king of Rome. The story goes that the crime spurred an insurrection, led by Collatine's friend Brutus. The uprising would eventually lead to the first Roman Republic.

Lady Asquith's new interpretation likens the destruction in the poem to the systematic destruction of the Catholic Church in England. In the years after the Act of Supremacy, the Church's infrastructure was destroyed and its lands taken and sold.

Asquith told the Telegraph:

“His audience would have understood the references contained in the poem, whether it was the King, the Court or its victims,” she said. “The Catholics and the reformers were the victims and he uses terminology that would have provided comfort to them and make a plea to the court for tolerance.

“*The Rape of Lucrece* is an extended allegory for what happened to England, to the Catholics and the reformers at the hands of the newly established church and the Privy Council, led by William Cecil, the man who set up the first secret services and had a file on pretty much everyone.”

*The Rape of Lucrece* was previously viewed as one of Shakespeare's lesser works, but now it is receiving more attention. It was written during his early years, when he was attempting to land a wealthy patron. Asquith speculates the poem may have been commissioned by the Earl of Southampton or the Earl of Essex; both men were in favor of religious tolerance. Her entire argument is highlighted in Asquith's new book: *The Earl of Southampton, the Essex Rebellion and the Poems that Challenged Tudor Tyranny*.

Clare was inspired to study Shakespeare's works more closely after noting the coded messages in plays written by Soviet dissidents during the Cold War. She says it's been difficult for literary critics to identify the political nature of Shakespeare's works, but she hopes that her new argument will enlighten all those who study the works of the Bard:

“He was far from apolitical and we only think he was because we don't know what the sides were,” she said. “All his work has

a political undertext which we don't recognize because we don't recognize the history and events to which he is alluding.

“But he was, in a veiled way, referring to the political disputes of the time. *The Rape of Lucrece* is about life under a police state and the attempt at regime change.”

J-P Mauro

[https://aleteia.org/2018/12/05/shakespeare-poem-found-to-have-pro-catholic-coded-messages/?utm\\_campaign=NL\\_en&utm\\_source=daily\\_newsletter&utm\\_medium=mail&utm\\_content=NL\\_en](https://aleteia.org/2018/12/05/shakespeare-poem-found-to-have-pro-catholic-coded-messages/?utm_campaign=NL_en&utm_source=daily_newsletter&utm_medium=mail&utm_content=NL_en)

## The Life-Changing Way a Teacher Greets Her Students Every Morning

*This simple gesture starts the day of right.*

Mornings can be stressful, especially for those children who feel rushed to get dressed and be ready ASAP to leave for school. But even kids with the most loving and patient of parents leave their homes in the hopes of receiving just as much warmth at school. That's why the morning routine of teachers like Amy Cleaver and her coworkers is so endearing.

As a year one teacher at St. Silas Primary School in Liverpool, Amy greets each of her young students with a warm hug as they enter the classroom. They are thoughtfully informed that they can certainly choose a high five instead, but as evidenced in the adorable video she shared on Twitter, the great majority of little ones opts for the hug.

Elizabeth Pardi

[https://aleteia.org/2018/12/06/the-life-changing-way-a-teacher-greets-her-students-every-morning-video/?utm\\_campaign=NL\\_en&utm\\_source=daily\\_newsletter&utm\\_medium=mail&utm\\_content=NL\\_en](https://aleteia.org/2018/12/06/the-life-changing-way-a-teacher-greets-her-students-every-morning-video/?utm_campaign=NL_en&utm_source=daily_newsletter&utm_medium=mail&utm_content=NL_en)

As one commenter, also a teacher, noted, the routine is a great reminder that students are children, not robots. Indeed, there are few things more beneficial to kids than for the trusted, influential adults in their lives to extend sincere acts of kindness and love.

“Sometimes throughout the day teachers don't have time to have interaction with every child,” says Gina Donaldson, head teacher at St. Silas, to ECHO News. “And as we know, one-on-one interaction for kids is crucial. That's why working a warm, personal greeting into the class' daily entrance is so brilliant.”

Well done, St. Silas!

## The Wise Work of the Bees

A story is told of some strangers who went to the home of Heraclitus, an ancient Greek philosopher well known even in his own day for his teachings on the nature of change and reality. The strangers arrived only to find Heraclitus in the kitchen warming himself by the furnace. Realizing that his visitors were hesitant to join him in such humble surroundings, Heraclitus bid them not to be afraid to enter. For, as he told them, the gods are present even in the kitchen.

Aristotle recounts this story towards the beginning of his *On the Parts of Animals*. His purpose in so doing is to encourage his readers in their philosophical study of all animals, especially the humbler and somewhat repulsive ones. As he puts it, “we should venture on the study of every kind of animal without distaste; for each and all will reveal to us something natural and something beautiful.” Aristotle notably points out that those who deign to examine the humbler animals with childlike wonder will be rewarded, in turn, with the great delight which accompanies an intellectual glimpse of God’s eternal wisdom.

To my knowledge, no one in recent times has more perfectly embodied the Aristotelian ideal on these matters than the French entomologist, Jean-Henri Casimir Fabre (1823-1915). Unlike many of his contemporaries, Fabre knew that expertise in entomology could not be gleaned merely by reading about bugs, dissecting them, and watching their remains as they float in some sort of chemical preservative. Because of this, Fabre spent nothing short of decades sitting motionless as he observed his living subjects doing the things which bugs do in their native habitats and inquiring, as only a philosopher can, into the most fundamental causes of the instinctual behaviors of these same subjects. Moreover, with the pen of a poet, Fabre beautifully, articulately, and

with infectious childlike wonder records the ways of life proper to creatures such as the hunting wasp, the dung beetle, the praying mantis, the ant, the bee, and myriads more. In translation, one can find many of his essays on bugs and other natural things under the titles, *The Insect World of J. Henri Fabre*, *The Wonder Book of Plants*, and *The Story Book of Science*.

In *The Story Book of Science*, Fabre spends several chapters recounting what life is like for the honeybees. After detailing the socio-political structure of the hive, Fabre turns to a brief consideration of how bees produce or, better, “sweat” the wax which they utilize as the building material for their honeycombs. This, then, leads Fabre to reflect on the geometrical wisdom manifested in the construction of the honeycomb itself.

More specifically, Fabre observes that the bees make their honeycombs out of contiguous three-dimensional cells, with no intervening spaces, and each of the cells has the shape of a regular hexagon (i.e., a plane figure contained by six equal sides and having six equal angles). Why, though, do the bees employ the regular hexagon and not some other shape in the making of their honeycombs? The reason is because, out of the unlimited number of different kinds of plane figures, the regular hexagon alone enables the bees to store the largest amount of honey, in the least amount of space, while using the least amount of wax.

To see something of this truth, let’s briefly consider the alternatives which the bees do not employ. First, they do not make their honeycombs out of touching cylinders. For, even though each individual cylinder would hold a good deal of honey, this shape is not economical in terms of its use of space. Indeed, it is clearly impossible to make a

honeycomb out of touching cylinders without creating many wasted intervening spaces. Second, the bees do not use either triangular or quadrilateral cells. Again, the reason is economics. While neither of these shapes leaves wasted intervening spaces, triangular cells would require far more wax than their hexagonal counterparts, and quadrilateral cells would hold less honey than hexagonal cells. Third, and finally, the bees do not utilize the shape of any regular polygon with more than six sides. For example, they never build their honeycombs out of regular octagons or decagons. Why not? Because, as the geometer knows, it is impossible to make a structure out of any regular shape with more sides than the hexagon without also creating many wasted intervening spaces.

Thus, we see that the bees use nothing other than regular hexagons when constructing their honeycombs simply because, out of infinite kinds of plane figures, it is the best one for the job. The amazing thing about this is that if a master geometer were tasked with designing a wax structure to store the largest amount of honey, in the least amount of space, while using the least amount of wax, he could not do any better in his design than the bees do in theirs. What this tells us,

David Arias

<https://www.crisismagazine.com/2018/the-wise-work-of-the-bees>

then, is that the bees, in making their honeycombs, are acting wisely, or more specifically, they are acting like master geometers.

Since they do not possess intellects, though, the bees must be acting according to a wisdom or a geometry which is not their own. As Fabre puts it, “Bees are profound geometricians because they work, unconsciously, under the inspiration of the sublime Geometrician.” This “sublime Geometrician,” of course, is God Himself. In making the bees to be what they are, God gives to them a certain inborn know-how which is a principle of their instinctive behavior. In so doing, God causes the bees to share in a finite and unconscious way in His eternal wisdom. And it is this share in God’s eternal wisdom which the bees, in turn, manifest to those of us who would take the time to watch and wonder about the acts of these humble creatures of God. Knowing this, let us bear in mind the sapiential observation of the twentieth-century Thomist, Charles De Koninck, with which Fabre would undoubtedly agree: “Indifference to the phenomena of sun and moon, to bugs and elephants, proves the absence of philosophic temperament.”

## The Skill Your Child Needs to Read Effectively (That Many Schools Have Stopped Teaching)

It can be agonizing to watch your child struggle through this exercise, but it's vital to their reading success.

My son Lincoln is learning to read. He brings home these books with simple sentences and pictures, and when he struggles to sound out a word he looks at the picture for a clue.

I don't love the pictures. Usually what happens is that he looks at the picture and blurts out the first thing that comes to his mind, regardless of the letters that he had been previously sounding out. For example, yesterday he was reading a book about blocks and came to the word "building."

"B-u—eye—uuu—" he struggled for a moment, flummoxed by the diphthong. His eyes darted over to the picture and he shouted triumphantly, "tower!" before attempting to turn the page.

"Linc, wait a minute," I said as I turned the page back. "Look at the word. What sound does it start with?" He started to say "b" then switched to "t," his eyes darting again back to the picture. I covered the picture with my hand. "Lincoln, sound the word out instead of looking at the picture."

When the picture was no longer available to him, he finally struggled through the task of sounding out the difficult word. And every time he came to that word again, he would glance at the picture and say "tower" instead of sounding the word out. I finally began covering the picture as soon as he turned the page. Only then did he start blending the sounds reliably each time he came across the word.

I was in college before I realized that many people don't learn to blend sounds. I was shocked at the number of my classmates – at

an elite, private university – who literally could not sound words out. When reading aloud they would often guess, attempting to decipher the sound of the word based on the letters present, but it was abundantly clear that their guesses were just that.

I once asked a good friend how, if she had never learned to blend sounds and decode words, she had learned to read at all?

"We learned to read by memorizing words," she said. "I can't read words I've never seen because I don't know them."

My friend, like millions of other American children, was failed by our educational system. The Atlantic recently laid out the long history of the "reading wars," concluding with the sobering truth that despite clear scientific evidence supporting it, many American children still aren't being taught how to read:

In the early 1950s, Rudolf Flesch wrote a bestseller called *Why Johnny Can't Read*, in which he blasted the American education system for failing to teach phonics. Students were expected to learn to read by memorizing words, using simple books like the Dick-and-Jane readers. Confronted with words they hadn't memorized – like kid – they would hit a wall.

Flesch's message resonated with parents, but educators generally dismissed it. Eventually they abandoned the Dick-and-Jane books, but they continued to insist that teaching phonics was boring and unnecessary. Surround children with good literature and encourage them to guess at words from context, teachers said, and they would naturally pick up the ability to decode, the way babies pick up the ability to speak.

Scientists have disagreed. As many as half of all children won't learn to read unless they get systematic instruction in what are called foundational reading skills, including phonics,

according to reading expert Phyllis Bertin. And even those who manage to learn to read without that kind of instruction would benefit from it.

I had been drilled ad nauseam in phonics in elementary school, so it never occurred to me that there was another way to learn to read. And if it bothered me as a college student that my friends had never actually been taught how to read, it makes me crazy as an adult. Memorizing words isn't reading – and knowing how to read is vital for a child's future, no matter what field they enter.

So far, I have absolutely loved Lincoln's kindergarten teacher and curriculum. Decoding and blending sounds is a clear priority, as the kids have now moved on to reading "nonsense" words in order to reinforce the skill of sound blending rather than sight memorization. The pictures in the book are an unfortunate reality of most kindergarten material, though, and they serve as a reminder that we still haven't let go of the idea that the human brain is like a computer, needing only to be fed the right

Calah Alexander

[https://aleteia.org/2018/12/13/the-skill-your-child-needs-to-read-effectively-that-many-schools-have-stopped-teaching/?utm\\_campaign=NL\\_en&utm\\_source=daily\\_newsletter&utm\\_medium=mail&utm\\_content=NL\\_en](https://aleteia.org/2018/12/13/the-skill-your-child-needs-to-read-effectively-that-many-schools-have-stopped-teaching/?utm_campaign=NL_en&utm_source=daily_newsletter&utm_medium=mail&utm_content=NL_en)

information in order to spit it back out later on.

The human brain is not a machine. We don't learn to read by memorizing words in the same way we could never learn to add or subtract by memorizing numbers. Our brains have to learn how a process works, make the synaptic connections, then fine-tune that process until it becomes as automatic as breathing or sneezing. Our brains literally change when we learn to read – and it's a different change than the one that occurs when we memorize a word. It's a change that takes time and effort. Our kids have to struggle through it, and that can be hard for parents and teachers to watch.

I know it's hard to watch them struggle through blending sounds. I hate that part of learning to read – but that's the most important part. They have to be allowed to struggle in order to succeed. So the next time your kid comes home with a picture-book easy reader, do them a favor and cover up those pictures. They'll thank you for it later.

## **In Jerusalem or Online, a Language School Offers An Immersive Experience in Ancient Languages**

*Polis—The Jerusalem Institute for Languages and Humanities  
is trying to help reconnect society with its Greek, Hebrew and Latin roots.*

In the early 21st century, when more and more people are communicating through email, text messages and social media, when memes convey the most profound truths of life, when Google can translate from any language, when artificial intelligence can guess what you want to say or buy next, when there is no confusion or misunderstanding among peoples, and there is no chance of our opinions being manipulated by business or political interests (foreign or domestic) ... who but a few scholarly types would want to embark on an endeavor like studying ancient languages?

Plenty of people, says Christophe Rico – enough, he says, to warrant the worldwide expansion of a language school in Jerusalem.

Rico directs Polis—The Jerusalem Institute for Languages and Humanities – an academic institution founded in 2011 by a group of international scholars. The goal of the non-profit institute is the renewal of the Humanities through the revival of ancient languages and the return to the foundational texts of Western civilization: the Bible, ancient playwrights, historians, poets and philosophers, the Fathers of the Church, etc.

Having studied Classics in Aix-en-Provence, France, Rico visited Jerusalem in 1992, as he was about to finish a Ph.D at the Sorbonne.

“While I was here, I found a job in Jerusalem through the University of Strasbourg, which appointed me as an ancient Greek instructor at the Ecole Biblique, with which it had close links,”

Rico said in an interview. “I found the Jerusalem experience so interesting as a linguist and as a Christian that I decided to stay here.”

He had also been in discussion with colleagues about starting a school where students could study ancient languages in an immersive method – learning much as a child learns his mother tongue, without getting hung up on the fine points of grammar in the beginning.

“Back in 2011, I had a colleague named Eran Shuali (currently member of the faculty of the University of Strasbourg),” Rico said. “We both taught ancient languages through full immersion: he taught Biblical Hebrew, while I taught ancient Greek. We talked a lot about the project, and he was instrumental in developing the idea of Polis. Another scholar who deeply contributed to the idea was Henri Gourinard, an ancient Near East historian who now teaches historical geography at Polis and manages all the field trips to ancient sites throughout the country. The idea of the Polis method to teach languages was developed together with Stephen Hill, specialist in second language acquisition who lives currently in Virginia and collaborates in Polis summer courses.”

The founders “believed in the idea of renewing all the fields of humanities through a deeper connection to the languages which are at the foundation of our culture,” Rico said.

Starting such a school was an important contribution to reversing a trend in academia, the founders believed: “Due to the loss of teaching of the Greek and Latin

languages, most of this invaluable heritage remains inaccessible to the general public,” said Rico. There are important works by Aquinas, Galen and Alcuin, for example, that still have not been translated into English, he said.

“More than half of the writings from ancient and medieval times can be read today only in Greek, Latin, Hebrew or Arabic,” said the Polis director. “Hence, 21st-century man finds himself in front of a dramatic situation: being unable to access his cultural roots, he cannot assimilate his heritage.”

Catherine Crnkovich studied at Polis in order to master ancient Greek, a skill she needs to do graduate work in philosophy and theology.

“You have scholars who ... do their scholarly work based on someone else’s translation,” she said in a promotional video. “And then you have scholars who, maybe, want to go deeper and they want to look at the text themselves, and for that you have to know the language.”

Polis teaches Koine (New Testament) Greek, Biblical and Modern Hebrew, Latin, Coptic and Arabic. Traditional learning methods, focusing on declensions, grammar, and vocabulary, can be tiresome and tedious. Polis tries a different approach.

“From the very first day the instructor speaks only in the language being taught, while students are asked to do likewise,” said Rico. “Thus, the ‘dead language’ becomes a live experience: texts no longer look like something alien, detached from any present influence, but become full of vitality.”

While Polis receives about 300 students a year in Jerusalem, it is expanding its outreach around the globe. It organizes summer courses every year in the United

States and Rome, and now is building an e-learning platform to allow more people to benefit, even if a temporary move to Israel is not possible.

“There is a growing number of people interested in learning the languages that are at the foundation of our culture, who wish to be able to listen directly to the voice of Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides or Cicero or to read the New Testament and the Fathers of the Church directly in the original without resorting to a translation,” Rico said.

The institute says that E-Polis will be the first online platform offering courses in four ancient languages and several modern ones through a full immersion method. Rico is trying to raise \$150,000 through a GoFundMe page in order to develop the software application that will connect the Institute with e-learners; purchase the hardware for the platform, including computers, cameras, projectors, and audio materials; train the teachers, staff and researchers in order to operate the platform and to maintain it, and to provide a number of master’s degree students with scholarships for their research on language acquisition through distance learning.

Thanks to Polis, languages that were considered “dead” come very much alive for people like Crnkovich, who reflected on her time living in Jerusalem.

“This is a city in which all of the languages I am studying either once were spoken or currently are spoken, so, ancient Greek was spoken here at some point; Biblical Hebrew was spoken here; modern Hebrew is now spoken here; Arabic – I’m learning the dialect of Jerusalem. For instance, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the tomb [of Christ] is just covered in Greek words, I mean, Greek inscriptions everywhere. Actually, sort of all around the Church of

the Holy Sepulchre, I go in there, and everything is in Greek.”

Even for those not in a scholarly field, the study of ancient languages opens new horizons.

“In this world of ours, we get a lot of information, but very little formation,” Rico opined. “By formation, I mean a deep training that allows you to have a capacity of synthesis and also to exert a critical thinking with respect to the huge amount of information we receive every day. Classical

John Burger

[https://aleteia.org/2018/12/19/in-jerusalem-or-online-a-language-school-offers-an-immersive-experience-in-ancient-languages/?utm\\_campaign=NL\\_en&utm\\_source=daily\\_newsletter&utm\\_medium=mail&utm\\_content=NL\\_en](https://aleteia.org/2018/12/19/in-jerusalem-or-online-a-language-school-offers-an-immersive-experience-in-ancient-languages/?utm_campaign=NL_en&utm_source=daily_newsletter&utm_medium=mail&utm_content=NL_en)

and Semitic languages give us a formation which is invaluable. Languages are a way to convey a thought which could be misinterpreted or lost, even lightly, in translation.”

Rico and his colleagues benefit, as well. “Seeing so many of my students overwhelmed with joy after only six months of learning at Polis when they see they can directly read the Gospel of John in the original, and listen to the voice of the Evangelist,” he said, “I feel that our efforts are not fruitless.”

## Young Entrepreneur Creates Virtual Tours of Roman Churches

*Vadis VR is a way for anyone with an internet connection to better appreciate the glory of Rome.*

Amy Giuliano noticed something when she was giving church tours in Rome a few summers ago. Many of the tourists she led through masterpieces of architecture such as Santa Maria Sopra Minerva or San Silvestro would not likely be classified as religious people. But they listened intently to Giuliano, an American studying theology in Rome, as she expounded on points of doctrine related to the art works they were viewing.

“It was so interesting to me that people who were tourists and hadn’t darkened the door of a church in a while were completely open to hearing everything about our faith,” said Giuliano. “Every single thing I was learning at the Angelicum [the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas], I could communicate to them, and their walls were completely down; they were interested in hearing about it.”

That included stories from the Bible, theology, liturgical topics, Mariology, the lives of the saints, and spirituality.

And it wasn’t just that she had a captive audience.

“Rome is a living classroom, and you bring tourists inside these churches and you explain the art and architecture, why this space looks like it does,” she said in an interview. “So I just felt like, with people in front of beauty, they would be completely open to hearing all about what I was learning.”

When Giuliano came back to her native Connecticut to work on a master’s degree in sacred art and architecture at Yale Divinity School, she took a job teaching at a nearby Catholic university. And she had another

revelation: she was trying to impress upon her students the significance of the Church’s artistic patrimony, but most of them had never been to a place like Rome – and were unlikely to ever go there. For many Catholic students, if not most, their experience of the Church had not gone much beyond their local parish church.

“I was just frustrated because I knew that the vast majority of my students would never experience some of these incredible sites of religious and artistic heritage around the world that I have had such a wonderful opportunity to experience firsthand,” the 31-year-old said. “How could I expose them to this incredible beauty?”

There are photos and slideshows, of course, but two-dimensional images are detached from their context. From them, students won’t get a sense of size or scale, “or even the grandeur of the space,” said Giuliano, who also writes for *Magnificat* magazine. “I remember when I was little, and my dad took me to Istanbul. We walked into Hagia Sophia, and I was absolutely bowled over by that space, and I thought ‘How can I communicate that to students?’”

Videos might be somewhat better – if you could find quality videos. But watching them is a passive activity, anyway. “You’re sitting there watching, but you’re not actually able to explore and engage the space,” she said, “and I found that personal exploration of a sacred space was the most transformative learning experience, at least for me.”

At Yale, meanwhile, she had to write art history papers on sites she had never visited, “just by piecing together images from books and what-not, that were of better or worse

quality. That's not where scholarship should be."

Nothing seemed satisfactory. Except possibly VR: virtual reality. Giuliano decided to find out, so she trained in VR technologies, traveled to Rome on spring break and took VR recording equipment to some of the churches where she used to give tours.

The resulting videos were a "treat for my students," who were more engaged with the learning, she said. "I would send them home with a site for homework and allow them to personally explore [a VR-recorded church on their computers] and then come back to class having chosen the one thing they found most visually intriguing or interesting and then explain that piece of art or sculpture or whatever it was to the class and why they found it interesting.

"I was really happy that they realized that not all churches look like the one down the street," she said.

Giuliano's project also won a competition for young entrepreneurs at Yale, giving her a \$15,000 grant and access to Yale's school of management and law school so she could develop the concept into an enterprise. She calls her start-up "Vadis VR," taking the name from the apocryphal story in which St. Peter encounters the risen Christ as he is fleeing the persecution in Rome. Peter asks Jesus, "Domine, quo vadis?" ("Lord, where are you going?") – to which Jesus answers, "I am going to Rome, to be crucified again."

John Burger

[https://aleteia.org/2018/12/17/churchs-patrimony-of-art-comes-alive-in-young-entrepreneurs-virtual-tours/?utm\\_campaign=NL\\_en&utm\\_source=daily\\_newsletter&utm\\_medium=mail&utm\\_content=NL\\_en](https://aleteia.org/2018/12/17/churchs-patrimony-of-art-comes-alive-in-young-entrepreneurs-virtual-tours/?utm_campaign=NL_en&utm_source=daily_newsletter&utm_medium=mail&utm_content=NL_en)

Vadis VR allows viewers to virtually enter a church, either on a computer screen or using a VR headset, and click around to explore its art and architecture. There's audio, visual, and textual content, providing an all-encompassing "lecture" on the history of the church, the music of the period in which it was built and the theology that informs its artwork.

Giuliano provides educational-content distributors and university departments access to the content on a subscription basis but is also open to creating specific virtual tours on commission. Individual subscriptions might be available in the future. She has plans to return to Rome to record more churches, and will branch out to other cities as well, such as Paris. A professor at Yale is interested in having her record some Byzantine churches in Greece and Turkey and merge the tours with binaurally-recorded Byzantine chant.

For her students, she said, the VR experience has helped them understand why "people for hundreds of years have been working on making sacred sites beautiful. Why did they do that? What does this art mean? It just leaves an impression on the importance of what's being presented in that space."

Readers can take a sample tour of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, above. The Roman church is home to Michelangelo's Christ the Redeemer, a Bernini monument, the Renaissance frescoes of the life of St. Thomas Aquinas in the Carafa Chapel, and the tombs of St. Catherine of Siena, Fra Angelico, and Cajetan.

## Teaching Character Education With the Anthropology of St. John Paul II

*'Alive to the World' program, anchored in virtues,  
is making an impact on young people in 22 countries and home-schooling classes.*

Alive to the World was “my favorite thing to do at school this year,” wrote 13-year-old Vinnie Zignego of Trinity Academy Catholic school in Pewaukee, Wisconsin. “It taught me a lot about life and making decisions. My favorite lesson was about keeping your word.”

“I find Alive to the World extremely interesting,” wrote Maria Bay, also a seventh-grade pupil of Trinity Academy. “These were very important life lessons turned into interesting stories.”

Vinnie and Maria are just two of many young students who say they have benefited from the character-development program for children and adolescents, now being taught in 22 countries as well as in home-schooling classes.

Created 15 years ago in Venezuela by Christine de Marcellus de Vollmer, a former member of the Pontifical Academy for Life, the program is aimed at teaching virtues to children and adolescents by following the stories of two fictitious characters, Charlie and his cousin Alice, and their everyday life situations.

These include tales of friendship, peer pressure, relationships with their parents, romance, sexuality, love, marriage and the application of values such as loyalty, teamwork, personal responsibility, respect for property toward their ambitions.

The story-telling technique allows the students “to easily understand and identify with how to implement the Christian virtues every day,” Vollmer told the Register Nov. 21, adding that the “weekly chapters deal with situations that they easily relate to.”

Students, she said, “love the fact that the story seems to be about them and the situations, at their precise age, that they are living.”

Cardinal Raymond Burke has strongly endorsed the 13-level curriculum, to be used in classrooms from kindergarten to the last year of secondary school, calling it a “greatly useful and insightful educational program” that “meets effectively and rightly the plea for help from parents and families” in forming their children.

In a recommendation written in June this year, the patron of the Order of Malta said the program was “admirable in its didactic structure, transmitting natural truths, which is the condition sine qua non for religious education.” Having been tested in “several countries with notable success,” he said he “strongly” recommended the series.

### ***Totally Catholic Approach***

Although not explicitly Catholic so that it can be tailored to any school, Vollmer said the program is “totally Catholic” in its approach, as it is “based on the anthropology of St. John Paul II.”

“Our Catholic faith, given us by Our Lord, is all about living for others and fulfilling our talents,” Vollmer explained, adding that the program was “developed to guide children and adults to do exactly that.”

She said virtue-directed skills are taught through the program, such as “decision-taking, how to stand up politely and firmly for what is right, how to come to agreements in a principled way and how to debate effectively.” Young Catholics today “need

these skills,” Vollmer said, especially after 70-plus years of Christian culture being “aggressively” eroded by “various ideologies” and “much pain” being inflicted on children and adolescents due to the fallout of the sexual revolution that began in the 1960s.

At a time when sex education has largely been proved to be a failure in Western schooling and in some cases positively harmful, Vollmer said *Alive to the World* covers love, life and procreation “in an elegant and appropriate way,” while the “more intimate details, such as would offend modesty, are left to the parents.” (The program has a supplementary book called *Sexuality Explained* that helps parents address those issues at home.)

Trinity Academy piloted the curriculum for its seventh-grade class in the 2016-2017 academic year and found the classroom experience was “outstanding,” according to Elizabeth Mitchell, the school’s director of development. The students “were engaged, interested and impacted by the content of the program,” said Mitchell, adding that the children asked for the program to continue the following year.

In a world where “values are not being systematically taught or passed down to the younger generation, *Alive to the World* provides a narrative doorway through which the child can encounter questions of virtue and find appropriate solutions,” Mitchell explained.

Vollmer said in parochial schools in the “neediest and more difficult areas” of Venezuela, the program has been “indispensable,” as it “changes the atmosphere, bringing harmony and motivation to the classroom.” She said “bullying and violence tend to disappear, and teenage pregnancies, as well.”

Mitchell believes the secret to the *Alive to the World* program’s success is “very simple”: It says to each child he or she is a “significant gift to give to the world” and that “you are needed; your virtue is needed. You are loved.”

### ***Transformative Power***

“I cannot say enough about the transformative power I have seen in allowing children to discuss the logic of the virtues from the inside out,” said Mitchell. “Values are not imposed from without; they are embraced from within – because they make sense. And ‘if Alice and Charlie can do it,’ says the student to himself, ‘I can do it. I want to be like them, my peers.’”

Although the program is not explicitly Catholic, Mitchell believes its emphasis on the “inherent dignity of the human person” goes “straight to the heart of the Gospel and the Lord’s personal love,” and the program “pours it over the child.” By doing so, she said it brings students to the “starting point of any theological conversation,” eventually helping them to see “the beauty of Catholicism as the one true faith.”

Vollmer said that in private Catholic schools, students have gained a “better understanding of how to live as a Catholic” through the program, which, she added, is “the perfect complement to their catechetics or religious program.”

The program caters to young people’s innate desire to be “outstanding, trusted, admirable people,” Vollmer continued, but with “so many negative models” in the world, “they find it very hard” to know how to fulfill such desires. When they come to see that happiness “is the result of being generous, loyal, persevering, courageous” and other virtues, the program becomes “something they really enjoy.”

Cardinal Burke, who is a member of Trinity Academy's board, said he believes the "authors of Alive to the World have achieved a complete and successful tool, which will be of great help to children and adolescents, parents and teachers." In a true sense, he added, "it will bring relief and joy to all who use, teach and learn from it."

Alive to the World has recently been made available for purchase in digital form on the

Edward Pentin

<http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/teaching-character-education-with-the-anthropology-of-st.-john-paul-ii>

Blink Learning educational platform online. Teachers and parents can find resources here. It is currently looking for a U.S. publisher for the print version of the curriculum.

By purchasing the program, Vollmer said the proceeds will help "fund the impoverished and truly needy in Venezuela, where it is having very good results, but few schools can afford the books."

## Commentary: Is Anyone ‘Ready’ for Christmas?

After Communion at Mass this morning, our parish school choir began one of my favorite hymns.

The first line filled my heart.

“Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand.”

It was darling to hear those solemn words intoned by the cherubic voices of third and fourth graders, already giddy for Christmas break to begin.

I looked at my wife and smiled – at her, at the baby in her arms, and at the thought of our older children kneeling in prayer with their classes, indistinguishable in the sea of plaid jumpers and navy sweaters, somewhere in the pews ahead of us.

The moment felt to me like the end of Advent should feel – Christ is coming, our family will be together, work and school and activities will be put on hold for a few days of feasting, and resting.

But then the school choir sang the next lines:

“Ponder nothing earthly-minded, for with blessing in His hand,  
Christ our God to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand.”

I realized then that I had spent most of Mass pondering “earthly-minded” things.

I had been thinking about the work I had to get done before Christmas could begin. I had been thinking about the presents I still wanted to buy. I had been thinking about friends I hoped to see, and books I hoped to read over Christmas break, and for a while, I had gotten sidetracked thinking about why our den is so drafty and what I can do about it.

None of that seemed to me like “full homage” of Christ, our God. If God was demanding that I should be thinking only of celestial things- of angels and saints, perhaps – I was failing.

My warm feelings about Advent eroded quickly. My mortal flesh had not kept silent. I was not, I realized, ready, in a spiritual way, for Christmas.

But the extraordinary thing about Christmas is that no one was ready for it. Mary and Joseph were not ready to be expecting a baby. Bethlehem innkeepers were not ready to welcome the Holy Family. Herod was not ready to receive the news that the Messiah had come.

Christmas came – Christ came – no matter who was ready.

There’s a reason for this. The reason is that while Christ warns us to be ready- ready for his coming, ready for our deaths, ready for our judgment – Christ also is the one who makes us ready.

We cannot be ready for the things that matter most unless Christ has come into our lives, and transformed them.

We cannot be ready to respond to hatred with love unless Christ has tamed our tongues and quieted our hearts. We cannot be ready to give without counting the cost unless, in Christ, we know that self-denial gives us real joy. We cannot be ready to go out and make disciples unless Christ has made us disciples.

And we cannot be ready to give up pondering “earthly-minded” things unless Christ has lifted our sights, transformed our vision, filled us with a love that consumes all else.

That transformation takes a lifetime. It is the transformation of becoming a saint. We have a part to play. Mostly our part is to ask for grace, to try, to fail, to repent and try again. To trust that our efforts are not in vain, and that, by grace, our habits will become virtues and our virtues will perfect our intellects, our appetites, and our wills.

But all of that starts with Christ. With grace. With his coming into our lives – through the sacraments, and Scripture, and the Church – just as he came into the world in Bethlehem.

In his 2010 Christmas homily, Pope Benedict XVI wrote that in the Christmas message, two “elements belong together: grace and freedom, God’s prior love for us, without which we could not love him, and the response that he awaits from us, the response that he asks for so palpably through the birth of his son.”

He continued: “God has anticipated us with the gift of his Son. God anticipates us again

JD Flynn

<https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2018/12/21/commentary-is-anyone-ready-for-christmas/>

and again in unexpected ways. He does not cease to search for us, to raise us up as often as we might need. He does not abandon the lost sheep in the wilderness into which it had strayed. God does not allow himself to be confounded by our sin. Again and again he begins afresh with us. But he is still waiting for us to join him in love. He loves us, so that we too may become people who love, so that there may be peace on earth.”

Things start small. With a glimpse of hope, or a moment of self-mastery – with an act of charity that surprises us, or a moment of clarity we didn’t expect. Faith grows. Hope grows. Love grows.

God doesn’t move in our lives because we are perfect, God moves in our lives to make us perfect.

We may not be ready for Christmas, but Jesus Christ is ready for us.

## Get Out Now: The Compelling Case against Public Schools

So many of us have heard indirectly and anecdotally that our public school system is a nationwide wasteland that does harm to children and has wrought havoc upon our culture, values, and sense of history.

But has anyone really taken the time and energy to examine this catastrophe at its root? Perhaps not until now. Regnery Publishing has this year provided a definitive, careful, and well-researched exposé of the corruption at the core of the public school system, titled *Get Out Now: Why You Should Pull Your Children from Public School Before It's Too Late*.

Co-authors Mary Rice Hasson, J.D., and Theresa Farnan, Ph.D., daughters of the renowned Notre Dame law professor Charles Rice, are far from alarmists in a panic about an overblown issue. Rather, they have combined to present an incredibly rich and detailed overview of a pervasive and devastating problem that has for too long overwhelmed our young people and threatens to undermine both reality and truth, not to mention God's perfect plan for human flourishing.

The authors lay out their dramatic case in three parts. Part one comprises three chapters on the corrupting and game-changing "gender crusade" that seeks to brainwash our children into accepting the false ideologies of gender and sexual "orientation." The second part has six chapters covering multiple other issues at work in public schools: atheism and secular humanism, the loss of American identity in favor of forming young "activists" rather than patriots, how parents are rendered powerless by the system, the "social-emotional" learning affecting our kids' psychological makeup, fake and failing education, and the inevitable hard truth that parents can't "fix" any of this.

Readers should by no means overlook the substantial third part of this work – an appendix of insightful follow-up questions, acknowledgments, and a true treasure of about 100 pages of endnotes that provide thorough and hard documentation supporting the accounts and claims presented in the nine chapters. No one – particularly advocates of this failing educational system – could seriously challenge the well-researched content, typically based upon the sad and often-tragic accounts of real parents with real kids in real schools that have turned authentic education and human formation upside down. In the effort to accommodate an ever-widening liberal cultural agenda that is literally stealing away the integrity of our kids' intellects and wills, public schools of every kind across our nation are willingly sacrificing our children on the altar of evil agendas that should be denounced rather than protected.

Take for example the headlong rush into madness that is "gender ideology." The first few chapters take on this diabolical re-imagining of the human person, exposing the "new normal" that John can be "Jane" if he wants to, and teachers, students, and parents ALL have to bow to John's expression of "who SHE really is." That which would have been roundly rejected as unthinkable just a generation ago is now viewed as a new and unavoidable "LGBT Gospel" that no one in public schools can opt out from accepting as gospel truth.

In fact, public school teachers form the front lines of this twisted "new evangelization" taking place in every nook and cranny of public education. If your kids find their way into a public-school classroom, on a daily basis they will be – not may be, will be – compelled to embrace the "diversity" of the LGBTQIA+ taxonomy that normalizes

every imaginable perverse emotion and attraction while relativizing the two truly normal and God-given identities we call “man” and “woman.”

Readers should be prepared for an onslaught of examples of how parents and children find themselves at the mercy of an organized and well-constructed effort to make it impossible for anyone to take a view that does not effectively glorify and endorse the false and distorted views of the ideologies of gender and sexual orientation.

While this one crucial issue forms the massive tip of a still-more-massive iceberg, it is by no means the only red flag in the public school system.

What about the venerable history of public school hostility toward God and church? This is a continued reality that has lost little momentum in the grand scheme of the system. Examples still abound of cases in which a family’s legitimate rights regarding faith and religion are being trampled upon. The extent to which science is being exalted in practically idolatrous fashion will take your breath away. Faith and church fall by the wayside in the public-school system, but the dubious claims of some corners of the “scientific community” are there to fill the vacuum, and must not be questioned, according to those who fanatically uphold these agenda-driven “truths” with the cultish fervor of zealots.

Readers of *Crisis* will certainly be familiar with the “social justice warrior” agenda that also readily makes its way into the public school system. Examples abound in chapter five of *Get Out Now* – situations faced by real parents in which their children are learning to look down upon their authentic American patrimony and instead adopt the mindset of social-justice activism. Unfortunately, we are witnesses to the fruits of this particular form of indoctrination on

an almost-daily basis, as it shapes the landscape of protest and outrage that infects the very fabric of news, politics, and public discourse, and social-media interaction that shapes our lives.

Another significant issue (chapter six) is how the public school system positions itself to empower children – and the system – to render the rights of parents almost irrelevant. The system creates alliances with the student against the parent – particularly in the realm of issues involving parental knowledge and consent regarding their own child’s choices or thinking. Parents are truly powerless and are having their own rights and responsibilities toward their children usurped in ways that put the system – not the parent – in real control of the values and concepts that will shape the child’s thought and action.

Indeed, chapter seven of *Get Out Now* gives an in-depth look at just how the public school system quite invasively seeks to shape the very psychological makeup of our children. The recent generation of collegiate “snowflakes” is in great need of safe spaces. They live in fear of being “triggered” by even the most inane opposing viewpoint. Where did this come from? They are being mass-produced via the public school system, psychologically engineered via “social-emotional learning,” which leaves rational discourse, critical thinking, and a true capacity for tolerance all in the intellectual dustbin.

Chapter eight takes on the challenge of documenting some of the more egregious examples of how the public school system props up itself as a successful enterprise, when in fact even its claims of academic excellence are really a façade with little basis in fact. Instead, there is substantial evidence of academic weakness at all levels of public education. This, too, jumps out to the reader as ample reason to “get out now.”

If all of these issues seem to lead the reader to a crescendo of discouragement about ever possibly “fixing” this broken system, that is exactly the hard, cold, and practical reality the authors want you to face. It is simply not worth putting your own children at risk, for example, by saying that, as a parent, you’ll be part of the system in hopes of bringing change from within. The problem is that the system does not want you to change it and has decades of safeguards and self-protections built-in to keep parents from ever effecting positive change. Sometimes a thing is too broken to fix. There is no reasonable hope for addressing all of these issues in the face of a juggernaut that keeps the momentum of this downward spiral going.

The real tragedy is that any solution is likely generations down the road, which means that to begin an overhaul now will only make the learning environment of this generation slightly less terrible than the one before it, even IF such an overhaul could get launched despite the overwhelming opposition in place at all levels of the public school system.

Before closing the cover on your copy of *Get Out Now*, do yourself the favor of carefully reading through the questions answered in the Appendix. These are the

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<https://www.crisismagazine.com/2018/get-out-now-the-compelling-case-against-public-schools>

nitty-gritty, practical responses of any parent or concerned citizen who has read the first two parts of the book. The responses provided by the authors are eye opening and of real practical value.

Regnery Publishing and authors Hasson and Farnan have done a great and unfortunately necessary service to parents everywhere, regardless of religious or cultural background. No parent can afford to ignore their documentation and conclusions regarding something so fundamental to a healthy society and nation.

We no longer need merely lament of the public education crisis in vague and generic terms. Now, in one book, we have concrete substance upon which to reflect. We truly need to know our ideological enemies in order to confront them in the public square.

But, more urgently, we parents just have to keep our kids out of harm’s way. We owe them that, even at great expense to ourselves as moms and dads. Nothing is more crucial than taking seriously the devastating harm present in the public school system. From cover to cover, this work nails it, beginning with its first and most important three words.

Parents of public school kids: get out now.

## In Defense of Literature

Recently I was mildly rebuked by a reader for something I wrote on *The Lord of the Rings* wherein I reflected on the valuable lessons from this work, as well as the life and letters of J.R.R. Tolkien, and their applications to the current crisis being faced by Catholics.

“Sorry, we don’t have the luxury of wasting time reading fairy tales during these dark days of the Church,” was the reader’s comment. I read the comments under my articles because I enjoy seeing what my readers think, especially when they add something I may have missed, or offer a smart correction. This one, however, got me thinking more deeply about the role of fiction in the lives of Christians.

In the first place, and up to a degree, the reader has a point. Are we reading books simply to “waste time”? If so, I can understand him. One should not waste time on trivial matters. I’ve read of people who refuse to watch television or go to the movies, and I often sympathize with that viewpoint when I check the TV listings. At the same time, this reader’s comment logically extends beyond what he calls “fairy tales” to all fiction, whether in print, on the stage, or on the screen. The point would thus cover Shakespeare and Austen as well as Tolkien. Literature would be a waste of time to this reader and others I’ve known.

But could there be a salvific aspect to good fiction? Those who read the Bible know that Our Lord provides the answer himself when his disciples ask him why he uses parables to reach some people. “If I talk to them in parables, it is because, though they have eyes, they cannot see, and though they have ears, they cannot hear or understand,” he said. Good stories help us (especially those of us who are a little thick-skulled) understand deeper truths. There have been

many novels over the history of literature that do just this; all the best ones do.

A newly released book by the Christian writer Karen Swallow Prior talks about this. In *On Reading Well: Finding the Good Life Through Great Books*, she ties famous works of literature to the various virtues, one book each for the twelve virtues. For the virtue of courage, for example, she chose *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; for patience, Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*. Her final virtue, humility, is covered by two short stories by Flannery O’Connor.

“Literature embodies virtue, first, by offering images of virtue in action and, second, by offering the reader vicarious practice in exercising virtue,” Prior writes. For her, reading – especially the classic stories that have survived the test of time – should not be done to waste time, but for the sake of virtue. We need to read for virtue – she argues this well, echoing the numerous essays and books over the years that define what leisure should be.

This debate reminds me of an essay written some time ago by Catholic historian James Hitchcock, explaining why he has no use for G.K. Chesterton or Hilaire Belloc, or even C.S. Lewis. All three seem to him like “boozy apologists” not to be taken too seriously by the serious Christian. “I certainly do not deny that what these authors have to say is often true and good. But art is long, life short, and I long ago decided that I should study other things.” As a historian who has taught at a Jesuit university, Hitchcock should read *Remembering Belloc*, a collection of essays by one of my favorite Jesuits, Fr. James Schall. He writes that the purpose of Belloc’s existence in this world was “to be sure that what is solid, the ‘permanent things,’ do not pass us by, even

when they are not of our time or of our place, embedded as they usually are in the most ephemeral of things...”

This sense of the potential passing of permanent things permeates Tolkien’s epic, and the writer himself perhaps offers the strongest rebuttal to the charge that reading about Middle Earth is a waste of time. In his essay *On Fairy-Stories*, Tolkien talks about the importance of a happy ending and the special joy felt by those who make it to the end of a crisis, a reflection of the Gospel story. All good literature, in the end, is perhaps about redemption, and the personal redemption of the protagonists is but a symbol of the work of the true Redeemer. Tolkien writes:

It is the mark of a good fairy story, of the higher or more complete kind, that however wild its events, however fantastic or terrible the adventures, it can give to child or man

that hears it, when the “turn” comes, a catch of the breath, a beat and lifting of the heart, near to (or indeed accompanied by) tears, as keen as that given by any form of literary art, and having a peculiar quality.

The reader I mentioned at the beginning – and others like him – might not feel he needs parables or stories to understand or accept the deeper truths, but many of us do; I for one am grateful for the divine parables we find in Scripture as well as the fairy tales written by more modern-day hands. At times like these, when we are clearly in what my reader rightly calls “the dark days of the Church,” we need to find hope and joy to keep us from despair, and to “lift our heart,” as Tolkien writes. A spiritual reflection on great literature is but one avenue to this hope that sooner rather than later our Church on earth will emerge from this scouring (to borrow a very apt term from *Lord of the Rings*) it desperately needs.

K. E. Colombini

<https://www.crisismagazine.com/2018/in-defense-of-literature>

## Back to Basics in “Made This Way”

To many Catholics today, the idea of attempting to articulate what we believe on matters of sexuality to a culture that (perhaps rightly) views us with suspicion and hostility is daunting.

And yet for those who are convinced that a sexual worldview based in principles of natural law leads to flourishing, silence – especially when it comes to matters affecting our children – is no longer an option.

There seems a need to simplify our Catholic understanding of the nature and purpose of sexuality; to get back to the basics. Only then can we communicate about these matters with our children, family, and friends in ways that are emotionally and spiritually meaningful.

A new book, *Made This Way: How to Prepare Kids to Face Today’s Tough Moral Issues*, provides a much-needed blueprint for this task. Co-written by Leila Miller (editor of a groundbreaking book by adult children of divorce) and Trent Horn, *Made This Way* outlines ways to engage in serious conversations with young children and teens about sexuality.

Undergirded by John Paul II’s theology of the body, the book covers ten topics, ranging from sex outside of marriage, to contraception, homosexuality, transgenderism, and abortion.

While each issue is important and timely in its own right, *Made This Way* is unique in its coverage of how to talk to children about an almost overlooked topic: divorce. The Church has begun to explore ways how to help and heal in the areas of transgenderism and homosexuality. The pro-life movement is stronger and younger than ever before.

But many remain afraid to speak clearly on the harm caused by divorce, and the infidelity that often accompanies it. Miller and Horn present a balanced approach, advising age-appropriate directness on the devastation caused by divorce, always in the context of sound Catholic theology.

I recently volunteered at the “Santa shop” fundraiser for my daughters’ Catholic elementary school. My job was to guide the kindergarteners who filed into the tiny classroom (filled with dollar-store trinkets) toward the “perfect gift” for family members.

My first assignment was a little girl with long, uncombed hair, oversized glasses and a sweet, apprehensive smile.

As she gingerly handed me the paper on which her mother had listed the intended gift recipients, I bent down to her eye level and read them aloud: “Ok, so we’ve got mom. And we need to get a present for dad. And then there’s Mac. Who is Mac – is that your brother?”

“That’s mom’s boyfriend,” she replied quietly, staring at the floor. “I don’t see my dad that much. But I get to see him at Christmas.”

It was one variation of a dilemma I’ve experienced too many times to count. What to say to one whose very identity as child, or wife, or husband has been thrown into question through divorce?

Although the Church’s teachings on marriage and sexuality are a balm for the wounds of divorce in our culture today (especially for children of divorce), we seem to struggle to believe this is true. “The deed has been done,” we reason. It’s better for everyone to move on.

That morning as I watched the little girl pay for her gifts, I pondered how “moving on” is an unreasonable expectation for victims of divorce. This particular wound always leaves an indelible mark.

What is our responsibility as Catholics to this little girl? How do we help her connect the Church’s teachings on marriage to her own experience of abandonment? How can we help her commit to her future vocational call, whatever it may be?

To do so will require not just prayer on her behalf, or even positive role models. Miller and Horn remind us: it will require words, gently delivered by adults of influence in her young life. Not once, but repeatedly.

To the child of divorce, they offer affirmation: “Families are made to love one another forever and that didn’t happen in yours. Your family was dismantled without your consent. And now you are left with an anger and sorrow that is justified.”

To the child questioning his grandparents’ divorce, they bring spiritual clarity: “They

Hilary Towers

[https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2018/12/29/back-to-basics-in-made-this-way/?utm\\_source=The+Catholic+Thing+Daily&utm\\_campaign=4cab98569e-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2018\\_12\\_07\\_01\\_02\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_769a14e16a-4cab98569e-244037789](https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2018/12/29/back-to-basics-in-made-this-way/?utm_source=The+Catholic+Thing+Daily&utm_campaign=4cab98569e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_12_07_01_02_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_769a14e16a-4cab98569e-244037789)

may not realize how sad it makes God when marriages and families break apart. But God knows what will really make us happy and we should listen to Him.”

The book suggests children be informed that many divorces are not consensual (for teens, a brief but effective primer on the injustice of our system of family law is provided). This acknowledgment sets the stage for a beautiful lesson on the value of lifelong fidelity in sacramental marriages, even after divorce: “Your child (and you, too) have the power to choose love within a marriage, day by day, even when love is not returned – and even for a long time. God’s grace empowers us to love as He loves, without counting the cost, until death.”

A counter-cultural and ambitious message for children of today? Yes.

But the little girl from the Santa shop and many others in similar circumstances deserve to know the teaching of the faith on marriage, in all its fullness and splendor.