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A Word from Our Editor

As we begin a new calendar year, it is my pleasure to introduce a new issue of our on-line periodical, *The Catholic Educator*.

Since our last issue, much has transpired. Let me call your attention to a few of those developments.

The highlight of 2009 for the Catholic Education Foundation was undoubtedly our spring symposium and dinner, hosted by Kellenberg Memorial High School on Long Island. The speakers drew rave reviews, and I am happy to inform you that DVD's of the conference are available for a token payment; ordering information can be found on our home page. Some of the papers of the symposium are included in the current issue of TCE; they should make for great discussions at faculty in-service days.

Among the many informative articles you will find offered this time around, permit me to call your attention to two in particular.

The first is by the Most Reverend Robert Finn, Bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph (Missouri), in which he reminds parents of Catholic school children of their serious obligation to tend to their religious responsibilities on behalf of their children and to manifest that commitment through a written covenant binding them to faithful participation in Sunday Mass.

The second shares information on a recently completed study on Hispanics and Catholic schools, with both bad and good news. The bad news is that an infinitesimal percentage of Hispanic youth are currently enrolled in Catholic schools; the good news is that a challenge has now been presented to do

something about that unfortunate fact, with a well-thought-out pastoral plan that is very reasonable and achievable. We must do for immigrant Hispanics today what the Church did for immigrants coming from Ireland, Italy, Eastern Europe and elsewhere at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries – namely, provide for the Catholic education of the new generation, thus ensuring their maintenance in the Faith and their wholesome assimilation into the broader society.

The most exciting development I want to share with you is that CEF has produced an assessment tool, designed to help faculty and administration probe very deeply into the “Catholicity Quotient” of Catholic high schools through a three-stage process. The first is completely self-assessment, while the second and third (if schools wish to pursue the program) involve external sources. If you want further information on this program, please contact me directly.

I hope you find the material offered here enjoyable and helpful. As we prepare for Catholic Schools' Week, may the great saintly educators of January – John Neumann, Elizabeth Ann Seton, Thomas Aquinas, John Bosco – intercede for us all as we endeavor to do in our time what they accomplished so lovingly and well in theirs.

The Very Reverend Peter M. J. Stravinskas

Editor, The Catholic Educator

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Foundation*



The Risk of Educating: Verifying a Viewpoint

Like a good teacher, I will break my discussion up into four main points. First, I will give an introduction to who Monsignor Giussani is and how his educational method developed. Then, I will discuss the idea of a viewpoint and what it means to educate according to a viewpoint. Third, I will talk about the term verification and, lastly, I will comment on freedom as an integral part of this verification.

Monsignor Luigi Giussani, who died on February 22, 2005, was the founder the lay ecclesial movement Communion and Liberation, now present in nearly eighty countries across the world. Father Giussani's charism is deeply educational; that is not to say that Communion and Liberation's apostolate is to found schools or create teachers (although there are quite a few schools, especially in Italy and Spain, founded by members of CL) and Father Giussani was a teacher and, in the U.S., many of us involved in Communion and Liberation are educators at some level, and we hold an annual Education Conference for Catholic educators in order to share and deepen our experience of his educational method. However, this was not the aim of Father Giussani; in fact, Father Giussani never intended to found a movement – as he put it, he simply followed the indication of reality – to use a term that he used quite often, he obeyed reality. The Communion and Liberation movement was born out of Giussani's preoccupation with education, and particularly an education in the Christian Faith that was adequate to the needs of young people. Giussani's method of education, simply stated, consists of two aspects: First, the proposal of a Christian tradition as a unifying hypothesis for one's

life (I will use the term viewpoint to better explain the idea of a unifying hypothesis), and second, a verification of that viewpoint through critically involving one's self in reality as it is given. His educational method was rooted in the thesis that human experience is the font for verifying the Christian claim.

Two aspects of Giussani's home life particularly influenced his understanding of what it means to educate: First was the depth to which his parents taught him to look at reality, and second was their insistence on judging all things, that is, comparing the reality he encountered to the structural needs of his nature, of what the Bible calls the human heart. These needs at the center of the human experience, the need for truth, beauty, justice, love. From childhood, Giussani recalled how the capacity to judge grew in him. He remembered how every night his father would encourage him to ask why things occurred as they did, and he remembered how his aunt impressed upon him the biblical phrase "know how to give reason for the hope that you have in you." To judge reality, he understood was to ask for the reason of its existence.

Giussani entered the seminary at a very young age. His seminary years were filled with an education in the works of the masters of art and literature of Western Civilization. He was particularly drawn to an Italian poet, Giacomo Leopardi, who was a staunch atheist. Nonetheless, Giussani found that Leopardi was able to communicate the sublime expression of human longing which, for the poet had no response. It was at the age of fifteen when Giussani discovered the true meaning of the longing Leopardi expressed. Reading *Alla*



Sua Donna (To His Lady), Giussani understood that the longing for the beautiful woman that Leopardi wrote about was not a longing for one of the many women he fell in love with. Leopardi's longing was for Woman, the Beauty, Love. As Giussani put it, "it was the search for beauty that hid itself in the face of a woman." For Giussani, Leopardi's poetry represented the longing of every human being, the supreme longing for the Infinite that defines us and everything we do. Leopardi's poetry, Giussani later wrote "was a prophecy of Christ, 1800 years after he had come."

After his ordination to the priesthood in 1945, Giussani taught courses in dogmatic theology and eastern theology, as well as publishing in the areas of Orthodoxy and Protestantism. A few years later, in 1954, he left his prestigious career and esteemed research to teach high school. Giussani described how the idea to leave the university was born from a seemingly insignificant episode on a train from Milan to the Adriatic coast. He wrote: "During the trip on the train, I got involved in a conversation with some young students whom I found frightfully ignorant of the Church. And being constrained to blame their mockery and repugnance for the Church on their ignorance, from then on I thought to dedicate myself to rebuilding a Christian presence in a student environment." Shortly after his encounter on the train, Giussani was sent to teach religion at the public Brecht High School in Milan.

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict, was a friend of Father Giussani's and presided over his Funeral Mass, saying of Monsignor Giussani that he was a man "wounded by beauty." Before his election as Pope, Cardinal Ratzinger wrote of Giussani's decision to leave teaching at the seminary and the Catholic climate in Italy at the time:

"At the beginning of his journey, there was a disheartened weakness in the Christian experience that, though appearing to follow the tradition, was distracted, inert and without effect. Thus, the young priest put himself in search of how to communicate in a new way the original force of faith, lived within contemporary reality."

Giussani recalled his days at Berchet High school, and his desire as a teacher. He said:

"I tried to show the students what moved me; I did not want to convince them that I was right. I desired to show them the reasonableness of the faith; that is, that a free adhesion to the Christian proclamation was necessary by their discovery of the correspondence between what I was saying and the needs of their hearts."

As Giussani recalled, his involvement with students was born with no plan and grew with no program, project or pretense, other than to make use of the Christian presence as circumstances offered, and to respond to needs as they appeared. His exceptional ability to guide and educate students, while at the same time valuing their individual creativity and freedom, resulted in the birth of numerous cultural, charitable and missionary initiatives in Milan and Italy, and eventually Giussani's movement grew to the international presence that it is today. I myself encountered Communion and Liberation in the 1980's as a young student in California.

So just to recap: Father Giussani's educational method is really very simple – first to offer a young person a unifying hypothesis for one's life; in other words, to offer students a viewpoint that will supply a meaning for every aspect of life. And secondly, to help the student to verify this viewpoint, in his or her own life experience. And it is here, in this process of verification,



where the risk of educating comes in, both for the teacher and the student.

So, what does it mean to have a viewpoint that gives meaning to everything? Well, one of my good friends from Boston who is not a native of Boston, but happens to be a principal in a high school there gives the example of the crazy Red Sox fans, who see all of life through the Red Sox – they schedule meetings, weddings, baptisms, he talks about having to schedule faculty meetings around Red Sox games – everything revolves around that Red Sox. This might be a silly example, or at least a reductive one, because what can the Red Sox really say about life, love, justice or politics – but you get the point. An all-encompassing viewpoint determines all of life to the point that it changes the way you behave. Perhaps if you think about falling in love, it will make more sense: When you really fall in love, everything in life is perceived through the lens of the relationship with that person. The things that are dear to you are always in relationship to this.

A viewpoint is necessary, especially in education, because without it, without a viewpoint, a child does not develop. The absence of a viewpoint does not help the student to become more objective or to construct meaning, as some educational theorists would have us believe; instead, without a viewpoint, a lens through which to look at everything in life, a young person will be bombarded with a ton of information, but he or she will have a very difficult time trying to grasp the sense and meaning of it all. In fact, without a worldview, without a viewpoint in life, a young person in the process of being formed is thrown off balance, and the excessive analytical quality of the curriculum, which we many times use, leaves the student at the

mercy of a myriad of data and contradictory solutions. It leaves the student disconcerted, saddened, and uncertain.

I'd like to give an example of this, which happened to me recently with a student. I teach English at an archdiocesan high school. In a recent conversation with one of our seniors, who is a "good Catholic boy," who goes to church every Sunday, gets high marks in his morality class, knows the teaching of the Church very well, often singled out for things like participating in the Pro-life essay writing contest, gets very high grades (in fact, he is the salutatorian of his class), I asked this boy which classes he was taking and if there was anything interesting he was studying. First, he was surprised by the question, thrown off guard – as if anything in school could be interesting? In fact, this student chooses all of his courses according to what he thinks will look best on his transcripts college, just as his counselors suggest. Just to say, this boy has had a good rapport with me since his sophomore year and really wanted to take my British Literature class junior year, but didn't because an AP course would look better on his transcript. Likewise, he told me he wanted to take Italian but suffered through Latin instead for the same reason. As you can see, his viewpoint, at least in regards to school, is the future – what will look good on his transcripts. Getting back to the original anecdote: I asked Joe (let's call him Joe) if he was studying anything interesting in his classes. He proceeded to tell me about the gender studies unit he was working on in his senior elective sociology class and how interesting he found the fact that gender and sex were two different things. I responded by saying, really, how is that? Does that make sense to you? He proceeded to rattle off what he had read in his sociology book and what his teacher, a Catholic teacher, had reinforced, that is, that



sex is the physical bodily make-up you are born with, male or female organs, but gender is what you feel you are inside – gender is a choice that is up to you – if you feel you are a woman you are, if you feel like a man you are. I continued the discussion with this boy, challenging what the text book, and the other teacher had taught him – challenging his own critical judgment – explaining to him the meaning of relativism and asking him if his own experience of Catholicism had anything to say about this information, about the difference between sex and gender; did he have anything to say about the objective givenness of reality, had he thought about it? Had he critically looked at the fact? Did he think it made sense that if he simply thought he was a girl, he was? I even asked him if it had occurred to him to investigate what the Church had to say about such a fundamental issue as what it means to be a man or a woman. He had no clue where I was coming from. His experience of Catholicism was at best a set of moral values and rules he had learned and learned well, but it had not become a viewpoint; it had nothing to say about anything he was learning in school, outside of his religion class. What clearly dominated in this boy, without his even knowing it, was the viewpoint of relativism. And so, in the end, the boy was confused and saddened and felt reprimanded by me because he could not understand what his faith had to do with sociology. And he had never compared the description of sex and gender as given to him in sociology class with his own nature, with his own heart.

Remember Giussani says that a young person must judge the viewpoint that is given to him in education, must compare it with the structural needs of his heart in order for a verification, a true knowledge to occur. Giussani says the criterion for judgment lies within, is inherent to the person, structural to

our nature. He states in *The Risk of Education* that “the ultimate, inner standard for judgment is identical for all of us: it is a need for the true, the beautiful, the good.”

Without a synthetic point in life, a viewpoint, a worldview, a reason to do everything that you do, a young person will often develop indifference, skepticism, alienation and a lack of commitment to reality. Here we come to a crucial point for our current educational climate – the reason for the indifference that our children in schools suffer is that they lack a viewpoint – a worldview; in other words, they lack a meaning for what they study. This is really important because it’s not enough that we point to duty, or success, or the future (getting into a good college), or even moral values to keep a student interested in the things he or she is studying in the present. These reasons are simply not enough. The effort as an educator facing the challenge of today has to go in the direction of the viewpoint, not in trying to have more engaging activities or up-to-date technologies and methods in the classroom. The work of education is not that of training students, but is that of trying to unify, to foster some unity within the human person. Think about the fact that our students more than ever are often incapable of understanding and synthesizing things, even though they have available more information than you or I would have ever dreamed of when we were young. They are incapable of understanding, incapable of bringing to a synthesis – because they lack a viewpoint.

Does Catholic education offer a viewpoint? In theory, yes, but most often in practice, no, or the viewpoint offered is the same as that offered in any other educational context. Is the addition of a religion class in the regular schedule sufficient to allow a Catholic



school to fulfill its purpose? Are liturgies, prayers, classical curricula enough? No. The viewpoint needs to be the root of every action, that is to say, the cause of every action, not an addition to a structure which is essentially the same as a secular school. Vatican II's "Declaration on Christian Education" directs Catholic schools to integrate the Christian Faith into the whole pattern of human life, in all of its aspects: "to relate all human culture eventually to the news of salvation so that the life of faith will illumine the knowledge which students gradually gain of the world." In this sense, much of our Catholic education today has lost sight of the true purpose of education. It has assimilated the tenets of public education by draping them in religious or traditional language and as a result our schools become a photocopy of any public school out there, perhaps covered by an added curriculum of moral values or strict discipline which ultimately attempts to form "good Catholic citizens." But forming good Catholic citizens is not the aim of Christian education. The aim is to introduce the student to the viewpoint of the Faith, that is, that the Incarnation has happened and everything in our lives and in history is changed because of this.

Father Giussani pointed out that often, even for Christian teachers, the figure of Christ as the keystone of all reality is missing. Without a clear sense of a viewpoint, education can't happen for the child, and if we, as educators, do not pay attention to what our viewpoint is, as Christians, then we too assimilate the viewpoint our society offers – and the viewpoint of our society is that of educating good citizens who are going to be able and willing to work and sustain the country, but it is far removed from a truly human education, according to the Christian perspective.

The driving force behind every human being is the thirst for meaning, for our proper end. The driving force of our being alive, of all of our educating, is what Father Giussani calls the Mystery (capital M), and it is our awareness of and relationship with the Mystery that informs our viewpoint, that is, it is only in our understanding that everything has to do with the meaning of life, with the Mystery, with a God that is able to explain everything, that we can move forward, be educated as human beings.

Father Giussani describes education in *The Risk of Education* as "an introduction to reality in its totality." What is meant by this phrase is that the main purpose of education is not generating good citizens, nor is it to follow the development of the child, nor is it passing on knowledge for the sake of knowledge; rather, it is to introduce, to help a young person enter into a relationship with what is other than himself – and to enter into that relationship totally, affirming its meaning. Last April, the Holy Father stated in his discourse to Catholic American educators that there is "a tendency to equate truth with knowledge and to adopt a positivistic mentality." He went on to say: "Truth means more than knowledge: knowing leads us to discover the good. Truth speaks to the individual in his or her entirety, inviting us to respond with our whole being."

So, education is more than just knowing something or being able to do something; rather, it is a relationship in which, as the Holy Father says, truth speaks to you; reality and its meaning attracts you, provokes you, inviting you to respond with your whole being. This viewpoint towards a meaning present in all of reality that calls out to the person is what Catholic education is all about.



So, first and foremost, the responsibility for this viewpoint lies with the educator. A teacher cannot pass on a viewpoint which is not one which he or she lives. Father Giussani says the Christian viewpoint must be “presented from the context of a life experience that speaks for itself.” In this way, the teacher herself or himself becomes a proposal that the student must grapple with, and herein lays the risk of education. Let’s move to the third point, verification.

What does it mean to verify a hypothesis for meaning, to use the term Father Giussani used? He says in the *Risk of Education* that education must be an education in criticism (not in the negative sense of criticism, not in terms of doubt), but in the sense of sifting or testing as St. Paul said: “Sift or test everything, but keep what is good.” What a young person had been told must become a problem for him or her – problem in the sense that he must truly look at it, compare it with his life experience, compare it with his heart. If a student does not do this work of comparison, this work of verification, then what is passed on will be either irrationally rejected, for those who are the rebellious sort, or it will be irrationally kept, but will never mature. And I in my ten years’ teaching experience have met both kinds of students, and probably you have, too. There are students who will reject whatever you say simply for the sake of rebellion. and there are those who copy everything word for word and can give it back perfectly to you on a test, but have no clue as to what it means for them, have no idea whether or not it is true.

If something is passed on to a student, the student must use it, see if it is true, verify it, make it his own. This is extremely important, and we as teachers must encourage and foster this verification, and this is very risky because it implies an

involvement with the student; it implies a relationship with the student. And we all know in this day and age where the relationships between adults and students are ever-more curtailed, particularly in the Church because of the recent scandals, that this is a risk. But without this risk, no education can truly take place. Father Giussani insists that a clear presentation of the meaning of things is insufficient to meet the needs of a young person. He or she must be encouraged to personally confront the hypothesis, the viewpoint. This means that the student must verify the original contents being offered him, and this can only be done if the student himself takes the initiative. No one can do this work for him. The urgency of this comparison with the student’s own heart implies a tireless reminder of the student’s responsibility. Urging the student to take personal responsibility is not an abstract or academic exercise. It has to be an educational method; otherwise, we run the risk of presenting a viewpoint, explaining our hypothesis for meaning perfectly, but without the student personally engaging in verification, the viewpoint remains extrinsic to the student. We often forget the existential commitment that is a necessary condition for a genuine experience of truth and, therefore, of certainty and conviction. Think about the many ways you can demonstrate logically how God exists, but this does not convince you or fill you with certainty. Apologetics never becomes a source of real meaning. This is why verification is so important because, unless this happens, our Catholic institutions will give the appearance of having a viewpoint but will not inspire and touch the lives of our students.

Now I move to my last point – the condition necessary for this verification – to take place, which is freedom. And again, it is here that a risk must be taken – the risk to allow the



student's freedom to come into play. Father Giussani says in *The Risk of Education*: "To recognize that every educational endeavor poses a viewpoint; to become aware of such a viewpoint, to become critical of it, to allow it to form everything about the educational proposal marks the first step on a true educational path. But the journey begins when the student takes hold of such a viewpoint, and puts it to the test. Without this testing of the viewpoint, to verify that it is indeed a true viewpoint, that is, that it can explain all of the constituent factors that make up the entirety of our human existence, the viewpoint remains an intellectual construct, incapable of moving the student. Let me be clear: to be moved by the viewpoint, one must recognize its truth. One may move himself in the name of an idea, that is the viewpoint, but the viewpoint we propose reveals its truth exactly in its ability to attract the person. In order for this to take place, the student must engage his freedom."

Here we must understand freedom as it is defined and used in the Christian vocabulary, that is to say, freedom in its true sense. Freedom is not a kind of autonomy, a lack of ties, a license to follow instinct as our culture would dictate and in fact teaches – a kind of freedom to "do whatever you feel like." This is not real freedom; in fact, it is slavery. Going back to Father Giussani's claim that the criterion for what is true is human experience, I often challenge my students with this definition of freedom. I ask them to verify in their experience when they feel truly free. For the older students applying for college, I ask when do they feel more free, when they have twenty colleges to choose from or when they have made the decision to go to one? Or I give them this scenario: You are in love with a girl (I teach at an all boys' school). When are you freer – when you have every girl in town wanting to

go on a date with you, or when the one girl you are in love with tells you she'll be your girlfriend? If they are sincere with themselves, there's no question; they understand freedom as an experience of fulfillment. So, to elicit a student's freedom does not mean to evoke his freedom in the way our culture does; it means to exert a positive attraction towards verifying the hypothesis given.

So, St. Thomas Aquinas makes clear that the goal of every human person is happiness. It is fixed by God; it is not subject to human freedom...we do not have the freedom not to seek happiness. So wherein lies our free choice? We are destined for complete happiness, but our freedom does not immediately perceive the object which would give it complete happiness; I must choose between various possibilities that represent to reason varying degrees of probability of rendering that happiness. Father Giussani describes this dynamic in *Is It Possible to Live This Way?*: "St. Paul said everything is good, because everything calls us back to the Creator. Each thing, all things. But some things can attract you more. Before the choice of something you find less attractive, but which brings you closer to your destiny, your fulfillment, you are reasonably obligated to follow the second, not the first. If you don't do this, it's sin, it's error. This is so because freedom is still incomplete, so much so that it must be solicited through creatures. So much so that it can make mistakes... Freedom is on a path. Freedom of choice is not freedom, it's imperfect freedom. Freedom will be complete, full, when it is in front of the object that totally satisfies it."

So in the first place, an educator must elicit the student's freedom. Let's recall, freedom allows us to choose the means to an end, the end we do not choose, because the end we



always seek is fulfillment. So we must encourage the student's will to verify where this fulfillment is fullest. We must give students a proposal and encourage their wills to take it up. Pope Benedict addressed his concern about the forgetfulness of freedom as a central attribute of the human person in education when he spoke to Catholic educators last year at Catholic University. He said: "We all know, and observe with concern, the difficulty or reluctance many people have today in entrusting themselves to God. It is a complex phenomenon and one which I ponder continually. While we have sought diligently to engage the intellect of our young, perhaps we have neglected the will. Subsequently we observe, with distress, the notion of freedom being distorted. Freedom is not an opting out. It is an opting in – a participation in Being itself. Hence authentic freedom can never be attained by turning away from God. Such a choice would ultimately disregard the very truth we need in order to understand ourselves. A particular responsibility therefore for each of you, and your colleagues, is to evoke among the young the desire for the act of faith, encouraging them to commit themselves to the ecclesial life that follows from this belief. It is here that freedom reaches the certainty of truth."

So, the first thing we must ask ourselves as Catholic educators is, Can we propose our Christian viewpoint as that which represents the best bet for fulfillment in life? This is a question of our own faith, our own conviction and freedom. If we have not taken up the work of verification of the Christian proposal, how will we ever elicit the freedom of the young people we teach? Inevitably their freedom will be solicited by the images and fantasies inculcated by our culture. If we give up on this first point, we lose the battle before it's even begun.

And the second step for us as educators is the insistence that the pupil put the Christian hypothesis, the Christian viewpoint to work. As educators, we must forcefully insist upon this work. The student must be pushed to engage the Christian hypothesis if Christianity or the Christian viewpoint is not to remain a fairy tale or a beautiful dogma encased in crystal.

And, finally, the student must be encouraged to judge. The educator must pose the question: Have you seen how human the Christian life is? Have you found anything better? Is there anything that promises you, with greater reasons, your own fulfillment? We should not be afraid of these questions. Only through judgment does the student reach conviction. And here I would note that the student's judgment may be positive or negative. That is to say, a student may become aware of the truth of the Christian proposal through the betrayal of it. For this reason, Jesus affirmed that He came for the sick, those whose betrayal of the great call to fulfillment had wounded them, such that they were ready for His healing presence.

This whole dynamic of eliciting the young person's freedom brings with it the experience of risk at many levels, particularly for the educator. Giussani writes, "It is here that the educator's stability becomes important, because the increasing autonomy of the student is a risk for the teacher's intelligence and heart. And even for his pride. This experience of risk springs from watching the pupil begin to make his or her own way in the attempt to verify the truth. As every serious seeker knows, there are many, many distractions from the truth, and beyond these, there lies the continuous temptation to remain attached to one's own ideas, opinions and preconceptions."



Because of this, we know that the outcome of the attempt to “win freedom over for the cause of good” can never be considered a sure bet. We know that salvation is not assured until death; up to that point, everything is still in play. For this reason, Giussani adds: “The teacher should always keep in mind that the more earnest is his commitment, the more it must be a humble attempt which is enlightened by the hope of an encounter with grace and with a power and with an order that lies outside our powers. Precisely because of his discretion and respect for the student, in a certain sense, the role of the educator is to step back behind the overshadowing figure of the Truth by which he is inspired.”

A last comment: It is imperative to remember that in order to authentically challenge a young person’s freedom, that is, in order to exert a positive force of attraction upon a person’s heart, a teacher must be in personal relationship with his or her students. Every real solicitation to freedom comes in the form of an invitation: A promise of a road to that happiness to which we are destined. The supreme invitation to freedom arrives in the form of a flesh-and-blood Being, Jesus Christ.

As educators, our human presence must become familiar with the events, worries, concerns, preoccupations, promises and hopes of our students. Only this familiarity allows an educator to solicit a student’s freedom in the particularity of his or her own life. In our current context, this familiarity is viewed with extreme suspicion, yet we cannot allow fear to block us from taking up the risk of personally engaging ourselves in the relationship with young people. The history of Christianity is made up of the risk of sharing this new life with others. And we as Catholic educators are called to nothing less.

This paper was delivered by Miss Annemarie Bacich at the professional day sponsored by the Catholic Education Foundation on 18 April 2009.



New Practices to Strengthen Catholic School Identity

The following column by Kansas City - St. Joseph Bishop Robert W. Finn appeared in *The Catholic Key*, Wednesday, March 11, 2009.

Parents and Teachers Make Strong Commitments for Catholic Schools

Catholic schools share the mission of the Church. They exist for the education and formation of children as complete persons: sound in mind, body, and soul. Since their beginning, our schools have existed to carry out this work of holistic education: excellent academics, healthy human values, and Catholic faith. So much of what we do best is with these goals in mind.

In looking at the Catholic Identity of our schools in our Comprehensive School Planning Study, we have been able to affirm quite a lot that has and continues to serve us well. In every school I visit, there are visible reminders of our Catholic purpose. Our school children attend Mass, celebrate the Sacraments and Catholic devotions, and are actively engaged in service to others. The spirit of faith is very much alive in many of our activities.

The report that will be coming out of the School Study will affirm and strengthen these vital elements of our "Catholicity," our Catholic nature. This doesn't mean that non-Catholic students and families don't fit within our schools. Indeed, many families choose our schools precisely because they value this environment as positive and healthy for their sons and daughters. Most remain committed to their own experience of faith. But they often come to acknowledge that Catholic values are essentially authentic human values.

There are two important practices that we plan to add in the Diocese's schools thanks to our Comprehensive School Plan. In some ways they are so obvious that perhaps they may seem unnecessary. They have to do with the expression of commitment parents and teachers make together to assure the right formation of our children.

One practice is the teachers' **Catholic/Christian Commitment of Faith**. For many years a similar component (Christian Commitment Statement) has been a part of every teacher contract. In the future this statement will be expanded as a more formal statement of the teachers' dedication to the work of education and formation. It would be particularly meaningful if this commitment could be expressed and "celebrated" each year in a parish or school Mass.

The Teachers' Commitment Statement begins, "As a teacher in a Catholic School, I am directly involved in the formation of youth in the name of the Catholic Church. In carrying out these solemn responsibilities as a teacher, I will conduct myself in a manner that does not contradict her doctrinal and moral teachings."

Through the statement the teacher goes on to express a readiness to practice their faith, and live in a way which is appropriate to one entrusted with the care and formation of our precious young people.

While we ask so much of our teachers, we know that it is also important that the parents of our school children make their commitment to fully live up to their role as "first teachers" of their children. In this way both teachers and parents will determine to



work together for the authentic Catholic/Christian formation of our young people.

A Parents' Statement is being formulated now, similar to one used already in several of our schools. It is a **Covenant Agreement** whereby parents pledge that they will attend church services every week and see to it that their children attend each week. For Catholics, this means participating in Holy Mass every Sunday (weekend) and Holyday. For non-Catholics, this means attending church services of their choice every week.

I am convinced that this new resolve will help secure – ever more deeply – the Catholic identity of our schools. It will strengthen us all in the example we give each other, and assist our children to grow into the maturity and responsibility of their religious faith.

Most Reverend Robert W. Finn

Bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph, MO



A Catholic School Is Not an Isolated Enterprise

"A Catholic school is not an isolated enterprise, living and functioning in a world of its own, concerned only about its own well-being", emphasized the Most Reverend Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Birmingham, Chairman, the Catholic Education Service of England and Wales, in London on Tuesday 31 March 2009.

"Like the Catholic Church, it is not only knitted into our wider society but it also has a sense of mission to that wider society. So here there is no place for narrowly defined leadership," said the Archbishop of Birmingham, at the start of an important lecture, "Leading a Catholic School," given at the Commonwealth Club.

"In a Catholic school, the true development of the person, pupils and staff, takes precedence over all other things. We insist that it is more important than the public recognition of the success of the school; than the demands of political pressure; than the requirements of the economy, significant though these things are.

"From the first moment that any person sets foot in a Catholic school he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one that has its own unique characteristics."

Archbishop Nichols was addressing a distinguished audience of academics, school governors and head teachers, at the "Visions for Leadership" Conference, organised by the Catholic Education Service of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

"Today there can be no genuine 'human ecology' that fails to recognize the faith and religious experience which is innate in human beings and central to many people in our schools," said the Archbishop.

"We say that at the centre of true human ecology is the Person of Christ. He then must be at the centre of our Catholic school. He then must be at the centre of the task of school leadership. He then must be at the centre of the life of the leader. Faith in Jesus and faith in the outflow of that presence of Christ into the Church is the key component to effective leadership in a Catholic school," stressed Archbishop Nichols.

"It is not surprising, then, that in seeking out true leaders for our schools we uphold the provision of the law which recognises and provides for a 'genuine occupational requirement,' in schools of a religious character, for posts necessary to securing the objectives and activities of the schools according to that religious character.

"We need 'practicing Catholics' in these key posts, people committed to the inspiration and demands of faith and seeking to put them into practice in all the substantive life choices which they make," stated Archbishop Nichols.

"Catholic schools are places of a covenantal agreement, where we stand together with families, parishes and local communities, to create social solidarity: those bonds between us in which true human flourishing can take place. This is central to the task of leadership in a Catholic school and the



reason why it is a genuine service to our society at large," reiterated the Archbishop.

"The faith we bring to the task of education, the Catholic Faith which must lie at the heart of all that the leader does, is not simply a perspective or an interpretation of life. Faith does not simply give us a particular spin on what happens to us and how we are best to understand it.

"The Christian Faith is more than that. Nor is our Faith simply an additional source of knowledge, giving us additional information, or clarifying certain dilemmas through the gift of Revelation. Our Faith is not simply a value-adding factor in our human endeavour. In contrast, we have to understand that our Faith is transforming. It gives us the possibility of living a different kind of life," declared Archbishop Nichols.

"The task of leading a Catholic school is one of great distinction. It involves holding together the role of leadership with the personal and consistent practice of faith. It demands honesty and integrity. It is a noble service and I thank all who fulfill it, and I encourage many to aspire to that service," concluded Archbishop Vincent Nichols.

Peter Jennings
Independent Catholic News
April 2, 2009



The Necessity of the Catholic School in America in a Time of Cultural Crisis: Propositions and Proposals

Introduction

Let me begin my remarks by thanking both Father Peter Stravinskias of the Catholic Education Foundation and the Marianist Community here at Kellenberg Memorial High School for the invitation to address such a significant group of Catholic educators. I am truly honored by the invitation. I start with a caution and admission: I am no nationally recognized expert on the specific topic of Catholic elementary and secondary school education. I am, however, a sociologist with a history of sustained research in the area of the study of the mutually influencing relationship between American Catholicism and American society. Indeed, I am hopeful that my status as a, relatively speaking, “outsider” to the Catholic educational establishment might actually be an asset in seeing the “big picture,” that is, the general contours of the proverbial educational forest instead of being blinded by any one specific tree.

Please consider what follows to be tentative, subject to correction, and intended to stimulate thought, debate, and further research. And let me make clear that my remarks, or at least some of them, may not necessarily be consistent with that of the Catholic Education Foundation. And, more specifically, also understand that I recognize the fact that some in the audience will consider the portrait I paint too negative and, derivatively, my recommendations too draconian. I have not come to my conclusions easily but stand ready to be convinced otherwise. Simply put, I believe the hour is late regarding the prospects of forming a healthy and functioning Catholic

community in America anytime in the foreseeable future. Given this understanding, Catholic leaders must accept, I submit, the proposition that “everything is on the table” regarding implementing a strategy for the revitalization of the Church and civilization in America. And, as you will see, I place extraordinary emphasis and hope in the idea that a revitalized system of Catholic education, including Catholic K-12 education, can provide the engine for this revitalization.

The title of my talk is “The Necessity of the Catholic School in America in a Time of Cultural Crisis: Propositions and Proposals.” By proposition, I mean a cognitive claim intended to describe accurately some aspects of the state of Catholic K-12 education vis-a-vis American civilization. By proposal, I mean a normative action intended to redress some perceived deficiency regarding the ability of Catholic elementary and secondary schools to fulfill their mission in American society. My paper will start by offering a list of propositions to be followed by a list of proposals. Each proposition and proposal will be immediately followed by a short elaboration and analysis. The paper ends with some concluding reflections.

Propositions:

Number One: While there are many secondary roles for Catholic schools, their primary purpose is to develop within their students the ability to think and act with the “mind of the Church” in terms of the purpose and meaning of life, to make them capable of analyzing all of reality from an authentically Catholic vision, and to move them toward the ultimate and penultimate



goals of the Catholic religion, i.e., respectively, experiencing the beatific vision and living a this-worldly existence in service to God and the common good as understood by the Church. As the *General Directory for Catechetics* (#73) puts it, “In this way, the presentation of the Christian message influences the way in which the origins of the world, the sense of history, the basis of ethical values, the function of religion in culture, the destiny of man and his relationship with nature, are understood. Through interdisciplinary dialogue, religious instruction in schools underpins, activates, develops, and completes the educational activity of the school.” While there are undoubtedly some sliver of contemporary Catholic school children who complete their K-12 education with such a thoroughly Catholic understanding of reality, I strongly suspect that most do not. If true, this is testimony to the reality that, too often, what has actually shaped the student is the non-Catholic culture that exists both outside of and inside of the Catholic school and not, conversely, the Catholic vision properly understood.

Number Two: A significant reason why Catholic schooling has too often failed in fully instilling a Catholic vision has to do with the unfavorable cultural and social context in which it has found itself embedded. Simply put, for most of American history, the Catholic school system has had to operate out of very difficult or “crisis-like” circumstances. Simply put, the Catholic school system has operated out of a social context that was either, early in its history, “generically Protestant” or, now, one dominated by secularism. The only major exception to this was a “middle period” of American history influenced by a common Judaic-Christian heritage. But even here, the very success of the Catholic community in starting to move

into the center of American society produced a reaction against what Paul Blanshard and others of like mind saw as an encroaching and threatening “Catholic power.” Part of this reaction required Catholic schools to fight upstream against powerful American cultural gatekeepers whose operant interpretation of Church-State relations tried to make the successful operation of Catholic education difficult and, as much as possible, relegated to private sphere activities devoid of public recognition and support. This strategy has been at least partially successful, reaching its apogee in the early 1970s.

Number Three: Another significant reason in explaining the historical difficulty of producing an authentic and effective Catholic system of education has to do with internal deficiencies within the Catholic Church herself in the U.S. These internal deficiencies are dialectically related to the broader state of American civilization.

Early in American history, the Catholic Church was small in numbers, underdeveloped, weak, financially strapped, and mostly ineffective in the area of what the religiously minded call “evangelization,” what sociologists call “socialization,” and what the man in the street refers to as “education.” The Church then had few parishes, supporting organizations including schools, Bishops, priests, religious, and well-formed lay personnel. The result, in many cases, was religious indifference, irregular Catholic belief and practice, conversion to the various forms of Protestantism, or simply a devolution to the state of being “unchurched.”

During the middle period of American Catholic history, two developments were most notable and crucial. The first was the introduction of massive waves of



immigrants who came to America from Europe. The second was the construction of a well-integrated, functioning Catholic sub-culture (or what sociologist Peter L. Berger calls a “plausibility structure”) that produced millions of Catholics who were *both* faithful to their religion and experiencing upward social mobility in the larger society. The functioning sub-culture was the result of the successful implementation of the organizational blueprint laid down by the majority coalition of bishops in a series of ten provincial and plenary councils of Baltimore that spanned the years from 1829 to 1884. These meetings called for, among other things, the standardization of doctrine and ritual and the building of a vast array of Catholic organizations, including parishes, seminaries, and, most to the point, schools. Regarding the latter, in 1884, the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore called for the establishment of a parochial school near each parish where one didn’t already exist. While this goal never came close to being fully implemented, the call generated much activity in building schools and aided considerably in constructing the larger Catholic sub-culture, “brick by brick.”

The contemporary Catholic sub-culture is now, once again, relatively ineffective as a mechanism of producing authentic Catholic identity and protecting the political interests of Catholics in the American public square and throughout American civilization. The unraveling of the Catholic sub-culture started in earnest in the mid-1960s. In part, this has been the consequence of significant forces of social change in the larger society. In part, this has been a consequence of the overarching demand of many Catholics for “success” as defined by America’s cultural gatekeepers. In part, it is the result of a massive internalized dissent and crisis in belief having become institutionalized within the fabric of the Church’s

organizational life, including her colleges and schools. Regarding the latter development, the Catholic sub-culture was captured by Catholic progressives characterized by a zeal to “update” the Church and apologize for its suddenly unacceptable past. Following the lead of the liberal Baptist thinker, Harvey Cox, the world was seen by Catholic progressives as always “in front” of the Church, the latter whose duty must be to catch up as quickly as possible with the latest cultural innovations and, in many cases, fads. In the terminology of H. R. Niebuhr’s famous classificatory schema, the Catholic Church was to adopt a “Christ of culture” stance (as compared to either a “Christ above culture” or “Christ the transformer of culture” model). The Catholic self-doubt about the worthiness or necessity of the Catholic educational enterprise was expressed quintessentially at the time by the title of a popular book by Mary Perkins Ryan published in 1964, *Are Parochial Schools the Answer?*

The mid-1960s witnessed another consequence of the wide-spread crisis of belief prevalent in the Church at the time: large defections of priests and religious from the Church and the religious life and, derivatively, from teaching positions within the Catholic system of education, both in higher education and throughout the Catholic K-12 level. However, the weakened condition of the present Catholic sub-culture is not primarily from a lack of institutions or organizational ability or financial resources or lack of religious personnel (although these have played some important, albeit decidedly secondary, role). Rather, the present unsatisfactory state of the Catholic sub-culture is both a result and reflection of a transfer of millions of individuals in their “ultimate concern” (to refer to the term of the Protestant theologian, Paul Tillich) from Catholicism to some non-



Catholic allegiance, whether secular or religious in nature. The result of this decomposition and secularization of the current Catholic sub-culture, as supported by research comparing “pre-Vatican II,” “Vatican II,” and “post-Vatican II” generations, is that the Catholic population has witnessed a steady and significant decline in, first, knowledge of the Catholic Faith and, second and derivatively, assent to her teachings, and, third and also derivatively, commitment to the overall Catholic enterprise. All of this, in turn, has encouraged the development and growth of outside cultural and political forces, which are hostile to the Catholic Church. It is in this context that one can understand both the weakened condition of, and the weakened commitment to, Catholic schooling. The past decade has witnessed a slight and partial turn back to Catholic orthodoxy on the part of some Catholics, including the young, and in Catholic institutional life. The future development and implications of this nascent trend for the Church and her schools are, at present, unclear.

Number Four: The difficulty that authentic Catholic education faces today is, in a certain real sense, greater than ever in its history in the American Republic. This is primarily the result of two dialectically related forces: the internal secularization of the Catholic community — a form of “Catholic hara-kiri,” if you will—and the growing monopolization of power in an ever-centralized society, one progressively controlled by individuals increasingly hostile to the idea that religion can contribute in a positive manner to the American public square.

Regarding the first issue, i.e., the internal secularization of the Catholic American community, large sectors of the American Catholic population have either abandoned

the Faith for some other religious or philosophical option or have reinterpreted it in such a way as to “get along” with the cultural gatekeepers of American society who now have filled the void once occupied by those sympathetic to a traditional religious vision. The oft-cited claim that Catholics today constitute almost one-fourth of the American population is a fact that can be used to mask the weakened position of Catholicism in American culture. For one thing, the 25% figure is only analytically useful for our purposes when factoring in the huge, mostly Hispanic, migration into the U.S. It detracts from the reality that millions of middle- to upper-middle class Catholics have abandoned the Church in one way or another. Some ex-Catholics have left the Church for some more progressive Christian option (e.g., the Episcopal Church) or conservative option (e.g., a Protestant Pentecostal or charismatic sect). Many Catholics today are, in reality, “nominal Catholics.” They have become committed in a central manner to any one of a number of overtly secular commitments even when they formally participate in Church activities (e.g., a political party affiliation, feminism, the “American Dream” of living an affluent middle-class existence, devotion to occupational and career success, etc.). In other cases, ex-Catholics have simply become detached from any organized religious affiliation, with only some vague, amorphous generic “spiritual” sensibility remaining, a remnant that is impotent in shaping the individual’s thoughts and behaviors regarding the ultimate issues of life, thus allowing some other ultimate commitment to drive the individual in his/her everyday life decisions.

The second issue regarding the weakened state of the Church and Catholic education on the contemporary scene has to do with both cultural/moral developments and



structural developments in American civilization. Culturally and morally, America's elite leaders have progressively abandoned a common Judeo-Christian heritage in favor of a secular worldview consisting of such values as an "autonomous individualism," religious and moral relativity, utilitarianism, and materialism. If God is perceived as dead, or at least as irrelevant, following a Nietzsche-like logic, then everything is — or eventually will be seen as — possible (e.g., abortion, assisted suicide and euthanasia, same-sex and polygamous marriage, human embryonic stem cell research, cloning, infanticide, etc.).

Structurally, these dysfunctional cultural and moral developments are becoming, or threaten soon to become, enmeshed into the fabric of everyday American life, especially given the exaggerated movement toward the bureaucratization and a concentration of power in its public sphere institutions (e.g., government, the corporations, education, the mass media, etc.). This movement toward bigness, impersonality, and abstraction progressively "frees" the leaders of these institutions from the direct and even indirect accountability to a concerned citizenry, making a farce out of the ideal of representative democracy. Put simply, in conjunction with a secularizing movement in culture and morality that lacks any effective restraining transcendent frame of reference, ever more autonomous institutions and institutional leaders are allowed to act, more and more, out of self-centered interest, leading eventually, and seemingly inevitably, to simple corruption.

The combination, then, of the secularization of culture and bureaucratization of the American public sphere represents a deadly combination regarding the health and welfare of both the civilization and of a Catholic Church embedded in such a

civilization. Indeed, many might argue that certain sectors of the Catholic Church and community have succumbed to both an internal secularization of thought and the heavy, inward, spiritually deadening, and morally corrupting hand of bureaucracy. And, along with other components of American society, those sectors of the Church and Catholic community — including the Catholic school — which resist these movements are and will be subject to increasingly hostile intentions and actions on the part the gnostic-like leaders of a secularized American public sphere.

Number Five: The general direction of Catholic school education is towards meeting the perceived needs of a privileged upper-middle class Catholic population. Furthermore, meeting the perceived needs of a privileged upper-middle class Catholic population does not necessarily translate into meeting their authentically Catholic religious needs; just as likely, it means meeting the demands of instilling discipline in young people, protecting them somewhat from the excesses of a libertine morality, and providing them the opportunity for continuing the social mobility and high prestige earned by their parents. The point here is not that these latter goods are unimportant but that they are not coterminous with the primary mandate of instilling in the younger generation a Catholic vision of the ends of man and the purpose of life.

Conversely put, Catholic schools are closing in the inner cities, those locations marked by those Catholic and non-Catholic children most in need of both the spiritual formation of the Catholic heritage and the stability and skills offered by a Catholic school education. In previous eras, the Catholic school system was vital in providing a sound doctrinal formation to counteract what was a



pervasive religious illiteracy among Catholic immigrant groups. And the Catholic school system simultaneously aided immigrants in strengthening their moral worldview, producing good citizenship characteristics, and developing practical employment skills necessary to advance in American society. The contemporary Catholic Church is dropping the ball in not being able to address adequately the needs of the contemporary immigrant and minority community in America; a community that needs the help of Mother Church and, yet, could serve as an indispensable vehicle for her resurrection through the infusion of large numbers of newly evangelized and energetic members into the Catholic body.

Proposals:

Number One: The most general proposal is that the Catholic Church must rebuild its sub-cultural integrity. Utilizing the concept of Peter Berger and the late Father Richard J. Neuhaus, this translates into strengthening the Church's ability to serve as an effective "mediating structure" in American society. The intended purposes of a mediating structure are two-fold: to socialize individuals and politically represent them effectively in a public square consisting of such powerful mega-structural institutions as the government, the corporations, the mass media, and the public education establishment.

The purpose in strengthening the mediating function of the Catholic Church is not primarily to shield the Catholic community from the larger civilization but to provide a mechanism whereby Catholics can selectively appropriate elements of the broader culture that are positive and life-affirming while critiquing and shaping it from an authentic Catholic perspective or one at least consistent with the natural law. Without an

effective Catholic sub-culture serving as a mechanism of mediation, what shapes the Catholic individual is not the "Mind of the Church" but whatever is the prevalent cultural-religious message at the moment. And without an effective Catholic sub-culture, there is no realistic chance that the Church can serve as an effective agent for both protecting its fundamental right to exist and exercising its God-given duties, including contributing to the common good and the creation of a good society.

Number Two: In light of the foundational mission of the Catholic school to instill within individuals a worldview that is consistent with the "mind of the Church," the most basic proposal offered here is for the Catholic Church in this country to change radically her tactical priorities, in terms of its ministries and apostolates. This entails a far-reaching change in her allocation of resources, which are, unfortunately, presently shrinking in light of the Church's increasing inability to capture the hearts and minds of its members and of the American citizenry. Outside of the administration of the sacraments, there must be something approaching an almost exclusive emphasis given to Catholic education, i.e., *authentic* Catholic education, in terms of the distribution of its personnel and resources. The ultimate goal — that is, to offer a free Catholic K-12 education to all interested Americans — whether Catholic or not, obviously, is not attainable in the immediate future. However, such a social policy decision on the part of the Church would be seized upon most enthusiastically by those most disenfranchised in our society, especially among significant sectors of the African-American and Hispanic populations.

This proposal would simultaneously be of benefit to the disenfranchised, the health of a now-battered Church, and the welfare of an



American civilization slipping progressively into what John Paul II referred to as a “culture of death.” One can easily imagine American minorities — including African-American minorities, and the recent massive immigration of Hispanics into the U.S. — flocking to Catholic schools to their significant benefit in numerous spiritual, cultural, and material ways. The evangelization possibilities, both inside and outside the Catholic Church, would also be enormous. And American civilization would profit by the increase in the number of serious Catholics and Christians promoting, as they would do, a life committed to the common good.

Such a radical change in priorities would naturally have an impact on the degree and nature of support that the Faith offers other aspects of its internal ministry and social apostolate. All other aspects of the Catholic social apostolate, if it wants labor-intensive and financial support, should be an activity that the secular State does not fund for whatever ideological reason (e.g., natural family planning, pregnancy care, addressing the needs of those suffering from post-abortion syndrome, settlement or hospitality houses for the homeless and those who are mentally and physically ill, an increase in efficient adoptive services for the children of those parents who choose life over abortion, etc.). While, ideally of course, it is important for all social welfare activity to be performed simultaneously in conjunction with the presentation of Catholic social doctrine, the present weakened condition of the Church does not allow her to do everything for everybody. The following common-sensible sub-proposition should be followed: “If the secular State can perform some social welfare function without violating the natural law, let it do it, at least until the Church’s financial resources and, more importantly, numbers of personnel

both qualified and orthodox in religious orientation increases.” Put another way, my social policy proposal views the Church’s main social apostolate through the activities of her school system.

Number Three: It is important not to conflate the call to move the Catholic school to the top of the hierarchy in terms of the Church’s apostolates with a mere change in funding priorities. The key to the success of the Catholic school lies in its ability to attract teaching and administrative personnel who are not only accomplished educators, but also well versed and devoted to a specifically *Catholic* philosophy of education. Throwing more money on the present Catholic school system would range from representing an ineffective use of increasingly scarce resources to “throwing good money after bad.” What is necessary is to generate a network of academically talented and religiously orthodox graduates of Catholic colleges interested in teaching careers and assist them in securing employment in the K-12 Catholic system of education. The Church must develop and strengthen something akin to a theology and philosophy of authentic Catholic education and practically support this vision by increasing the salaries, benefits, and status of the Catholic teacher. The goal is to generate teachers interested in a long-term commitment to the calling of the Catholic educator, “orthodox Catholic style.” Conversely put, it is *not* to encourage the Catholic school to serve the function, for more nominally Catholic teachers, of being a mere “half-way” station to employment in the public schools. It is important to note, as an aside, the “lead” position that higher education plays in “setting the tune” and shaping the worldview of K-12 teachers. Simply put, orthodox Catholic colleges with orthodox Catholic professors are needed to produce orthodox Catholic K-12 personnel.



Number Four: The Catholic School must increase the scope of its activities to an almost 7 day a week, 24 hour a day, operation. Catholic schools must become the common meeting location for parents, neighborhood associations, political and religious leaders to meet and unite in a common cause to promote the spiritual, cultural, and material welfare of children and all the citizenry. The Catholic school should work cooperatively with, and provide ancillary services for, individuals and groups with which it hitherto has not had any obvious connection (e.g., homeschoolers, senior citizens, single young adults, etc.). Remediation, child care when necessary, sports activities, academic presentations and continuing education courses, musical and artistic performances, Catholic religious lectures, and debates on controversial social issues are just a few examples of the expanded activities that should increase in number in Catholic schools after the completion of the normal 9 A.M. to 3 P.M. work day. In all of this, however, the Catholic school administrator and teacher must respect the position of the Church and the natural law that sees parents as the ultimate authority over their children.

The goal here is straightforward: to create a wholesome and protective environment that both forms young people and re-energizes adults for active and healthy participation in every aspect of existence in the broader society. The Catholic school should become, in the words of the Second Vatican Council, the primary agent for the “Christianization of the temporal sphere.” At the same time, the Catholic school must be constantly on guard against the seemingly universal tendency of large-scale bureaucracies (whether secular or religious in nature) to become self-serving entities primarily concerned with the acquisition of the quite worldly, sociological trilogy of political

power, social prestige, and economic wealth/income. The Catholic school must serve the cause of Christ and provide nourishment to those in need and not be primarily concerned with feeding itself.

Number Five: The Catholic school also must work cooperatively with the Catholic parish, together forming the social institutional basis for a revival of an active and effective Catholic sub-cultural reality in American society. While the parish, of course, focuses on the sacramental requirements and needs of the Catholic individual, in the model outlined here, the Catholic school is a more comprehensive institution and tries to address all other needs (e.g., theological, educational, cultural, social, and political). Indeed, assuming that there are enough parishes in a region to serve the existing Catholic population, the priority should be “school first, parish second.”

Given the necessary priority assigned to youth by the Catholic school, the parish should continue to provide extra-sacramental services to its parishioners and the general population, especially the senior citizen population, if and when it can, during the 9 AM to 3 PM time period. Additionally, bishops should appoint their most accomplished and brightest priests to parishes in the impoverished inner cities and rural areas and, conversely, *not* reward priests and religious for successful service to more, at least relatively speaking, “cushy,” affluent parishes in the suburbs. Simply put, the “best” must go to where they are most needed: to the battlefield front.

Number Six: The point that must be stressed in the promotion of this ambitious and expanded vision of the role of the Catholic school during our present period of cultural crisis is that support for the Catholic school is not only a means to promote the



spiritual mission of the Catholic Church but is absolutely necessary for the survival of American civilization. Financial and other means of reviving the Catholic school system increasingly must be sought out from the wider civic and business community, from any organization and citizen concerned with the promotion of the common good. And, of course, parents (Catholic and otherwise), in conjunction with sympathetic organizations, must continue to press the case that justice requires that some portion of the taxes paid to government should be returned to parents to assist them in sending their children to the schools of their choice. Also, the case must be pressed that government grants must also be available to any private school that is working to promote the common good, grants that come without any excessive and controlling strings attached.

Conclusion

Sociologically, i.e., without factoring in the possibility of some direct or mediated intervention “from above,” the present prospects for our Church, our school system, and our civilization are not particularly good. The modern-day barbarians are past the gates and, from their perspective, are now involved in a “mop-up” action. The only chance for our civilization lies with the possibility of a massive cultural revival centered on the resurrection of the natural law, biblical wisdom, and Catholic social teaching.

Cultural revivals cannot be merely engineered. But there will be no chance of a cultural revival in either Church or society without a revitalized Catholic educational system manned by dedicated Catholic professionals and buttressed by cadres of Catholics who are willing to volunteer their services. This revitalizing task under such

present daunting circumstances is both the ultimate challenge and the ultimate calling of the contemporary Catholic educator in America. It is a task I implore you to take up with both enthusiasm and intelligence, with both your heart and your head. And, in the final analysis, heed the words of the late John Paul II to “be not afraid” and that of Mother Teresa that God does not demand from you worldly success in your enterprises but fidelity in service to His cause. I thank you.

Joseph A. Varacalli, Ph.D.

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Catholic Schools Get Top Marks, WLU Professor's Study Suggests

He calls it the Catholic effect; that when you screen out the family differences that can give some schools an edge – which parents have more education, how long they have lived in Canada – Ontario's Catholic schools still come out on top.

Economics professor David Johnson, whose fancy demographic formula compares the test scores of Ontario schools in a more socially sensitive way than just ranking raw results, says his latest report spotlights this odd Catholic advantage.

“Of 11 schools in Ontario that performed better than all others in both Grade 3 and Grade 6 in their socio-economic range, 10 of them are Catholic – yet it's a much smaller school system,” marveled Johnson, a professor at Wilfrid Laurier University and author of the latest C.D. Howe report called “Ontario's Best Public Schools.”

“It may be these schools are more motivated because of their spiritual focus, or it could be that Catholic families have a choice as to whether to send their kids to a separate or public school, so that puts pressure on Catholic schools to do better.”

In three GTA regions Johnson studied after he finished his survey – York, Toronto and Peel – the Catholic school boards had a higher portion of schools outscoring their demographic peers province-wide.

Johnson made headlines last year with a deliberate comparison of Catholic and public schools that concluded Catholic schools do better. This latest report, released yesterday, has a broader focus.

By crunching 11 demographic factors to paint a social snapshot of every school, he compared the province-wide test scores of schools with similar social profiles, apples to apples, and still found a staggering range of marks.

“About half the difference in test scores between schools comes from the social and economic differences between students – but the other half comes from the school itself, and that's what we're measuring,” said Johnson.

“If someone says their school doesn't do as well on tests because it has more immigrants, our survey has already controlled for that.”

Tiny Mary St. School, in one of Oshawa's more needy neighbourhoods, outshone every other school in its income bracket on Ontario's Grade 6 tests, landing a “100 percentile” ranking in the report.

“I'm really proud of this school. We've worked really hard to strengthen our skills in a very transient neighbourhood,” said principal Tracey Cant. At her school, half of the 160 students have moved at least once in the past five years, half live in single-parent families, 12 per cent have parents who are unemployed and the average household income is \$43,657 a year.

Superintendent of education Jeannine Joubert says Mary St. has tried everything from separating girls and boys for Grade 6 math and science to having the same male teacher for gym and library, “so you create an atmosphere where you can be a jock and also love to read.”



Beate Planche, York Region school board's superintendent of curriculum, warns against ranking schools. "Good schools, to parents, are those where their kids are doing well, feel safe and belong, and if the school is accessible to them. Rankings are one slice, and schools are far more complex than one slice.

Louise Brown, Toronto Star

August 19, 2009



For What Are We Educating?

A graduating senior from a Catholic university was interviewing with a prestigious business firm for a position. The youthful company recruiters explained that the work was challenging, and demanded about 70 hours a week, but that the compensation was outstanding. After many hours in the elegant office setting, the graduate asked the interviewers if they enjoyed their work. The pause was awkward. Gradually came the truthful reply that the work wasn't very enjoyable or meaningful, but that the salary and "perks" were considerable. At that point the graduating senior decided that he would not accept the position.

The graduate had a sense of vocation. He was seeking work that would reach into the deeper values he had learned, something that would provide a sense of meaning. He desired more than a job that would pay the bills and carry a handsome salary. He recognized that his ambitious recruiters had more than a job; they had made a commitment to a career. But he was seeking more than a career, more than financial security. He wanted work that would have meaning and make a difference for the common good. Any solid education, especially a Catholic education and a sound family faith formation would inspire such a decision.

Are we educating for service? Do we balance a sense of vocation with interest in a particular career?

Especially at graduation time one's attention is directed to such a demanding decision, such a critical choice.

Before Christianity, Socrates raised the question, "What ought I to do?" The liberal arts tradition, Western education, and Christian humanism have always spotlighted this concern. Christian spirituality frames the question in terms of vocation: "What am I called to become?" Graduates faced with multiple career options often falter and allow other influences such as family expectation, the opinion of peers, and the voices of the marketplace to dictate the shape of their lives.

Usually the course of career choice follows the pattern: figure out the lifestyle you want, estimate the level of income you need, and find a job that yields those results. There probably isn't a worse way to discover a meaningful life. It involves a faulty logic that runs backwards. It assumes that work is only a means to a financial end. Completely ignored is the possibility that work can be worthwhile because it calls on our unique talents and can actually make a difference in our world. One young attorney lamented, "I hate spending 60 hours a week making rich people richer."

Christianity offers a different "take" on vocation, and advises us to use our eyes of faith to determine our personal calling, to discover our gifts and aspirations and apply them to the important needs of our world. In the spirit of the Gospel an authentic calling reaches beyond personal fulfillment to a concern for justice and peace that addresses the fulfillment of the needs of others, even if they are strangers. God calls each to heal, serve, and create.

Champions of the laity like Blessed William Joseph Chaminade and others of the 19th



and 20th centuries, and especially the Second Vatican Council, insist that the concept of vocation extends to all the baptized. All are equally called to holiness and to service for the realization of God's reign in this world. Dedicated followers of Christ follow the example of the Mother of Christ to pay close attention to the actual needs of the world and the Church in order to translate their desires into practical service. Christ's life made it clear that his followers should take their cues from the people they serve, and not from their own needs.

Our Christian faith leads us to understand that the human desire to serve reflects Christ's compassion. It is God's desire for us to be concerned for healing the world in the circumstances of our family, job, and community. This is where we find God, and where God finds us. There is no standard blueprint for life. We learn "on the job" to discern God's will in our earthly pilgrimage. The result is that we eventually end up not with a road map but with a compass. Our continuing challenge is: How can I sustain a vocation while pursuing a career?

We are called to educate ourselves to solidarity. The Bible's concern for justice is rooted in love of neighbor and the realization of God's covenant with humanity. Consequently people of faith pay special attention to the suffering children of God. When God's spirit works in the depths of our being in order to help us become aware of our gifts and hopes, that same Spirit works through our experience to indicate what the world needs from us. The Spirit helps us to see those problems that our talents are uniquely suited to address.

Without the light of faith and the honest awareness that God has gifted us, the world's needs may seem an overwhelming

burden. In that case our talents and aspirations would be wasted on mere success.

Brother John M. Samaha, S.M.



On Liberal Arts Education

The old Trivium began a student at about age five learning the alphabet and its sounds and its use to write the words of Latin, the language of the schools, the common language of international life in Europe. Students learned Latin stories, Latin songs, Latin poetry, chiefly Virgil and Ovid, and memorized large portions of Latin literature and the Bible. They learned the psalms for use in the Office, the prayers of the Mass, and a conversational spoken language used by all educated men and women. At about age 11 or 12, they began the study of Logic, the shape and relevance of argument, and the fallacies of logic that throw an argument into nonsense, and the pleasure, as Dorothy Sayers points out, in her important address, "The Lost Tools of Learning," of tripping up their elders in an argument. They learned to listen, critique, and debate each other and to dispute fine points with their fellows and with the masters, and then about age 14 they studied the same literature they had read and memorized earlier, this time for its persuasive power and its sonority. They learned to make a persuasive argument of sound logic and impressive style. And then, when ready, they presented their mastery of the Rhetorical Art in a public oration on some set topic well known and often too familiar from over-use to allow for much novelty, but demanding much creativity and ingenuity to make the familiar interesting. The best of the successful at this public test went on to the Quadrivium.

Of course, they would not be just beginning to learn their numbers or their ciphering when they reached the Quadrivium. That study was a part of the Grammar years. They would be learning the application and meaning of numbers, the connection of

arithmetic and simple geometry to greater questions and problems of the nature of the physical world. The movements of the stars and the techniques of measuring great distance and approximating spaces. And last, the meaning of the affect of those tunes and hymns they had memorized and been singing from the beginning of the Grammar years, the meaning of ratios and intervals. They learned Music Theory, music philosophy, the art of discovering harmony in the world around them. They were then expected to present that learning to the public in a discourse on meaning that would decide their worthiness to go on to the "higher subjects" of history, philosophy, and theology.

The Quadrivium, taken up after the Trivium, in the old schooling, was concerned with achieving numeracy, the skill of understanding number, both practically in ciphering, and philosophically in measuring and accounting for the ratios of being, relativity and relationship. The quadrivium takes the mind into the abstract and hypothetical realm that number names, away from the particular and the concrete, the imaged, and carries the soul toward the imageless and eternal Divine. Even in its simplest and non-philosophical form, The Quadrivium is no less important than the Trivium for our commercial times and the manipulation of statistics and computer-driven culture, not to mention the all-pervasive sound of the rock band....

The educational reformers, all Protestant, turned to the new experiment in Germany, that had started state schools under the Prussian Kings before the Napoleonic era. There, the old Liberal Arts had been



"modernized," not dropped, not abandoned but "reformed." The Germans had designed a more "scientific," a more "efficient" way to impart the Liberal Arts, a way that would take into account the new shape of European society, the needs and prominence of the new middle class, of commerce, and of bureaucratic government. Of course, the Prussians were not concerned with making a "free" citizenry, but they were concerned with making a prosperous citizenry, and so the system was designed to enable a businessman to do his accounts, a lawyer to master the civil codes, and a clerk to file his dossiers. As the growing new sciences demanded, the German system gave early prominence to numeracy and natural philosophy as equal weights in the grammar years with language study, which in the German schools became French and English studies, not native German yet. Students could be expected to learn a set body of material in a year, matriculate to the next level, repeat the process, and so be turned out on a fairly standardized model at the end of the process, all knowing the same things and qualified by a common standard, approved and certified by the State....

Please do not think that this reformed liberal arts curriculum was not a Liberal Arts curriculum, it was and is. The changes had to do with the loss of Latin and foreign language in favor of the grammar of a standardized American English, the equal weight given mathematics and language studies in the early years, the standardization of history and geography studies into separate "subjects," and the invention of the now-standard "subjects," Reading, Spelling, Grammar, Composition, Arithmetic, and Geometry, History and Civics, geography and Science — in which teachers were encouraged to "major" or specialize. In the older Liberal Arts curriculum, those "subjects" had all been taken up, but usually

not distinguished as subjects in themselves but interconnected as the year progressed....

But there was in the reform, from its earliest roots, a certain anti-traditional, secularizing, even revolutionary spirit. The search for efficiency, the demand for equality, right and good though they are, carry with them a tendency of absolutism, of immediate gratification, that can bring the whole house down around us. The American educators were always trying new arrangements and new experiments to make the system either more efficient, or more equal, or just plain more interesting for the teacher to teach. That's when the 1960's intervened.

Educationists today distinguish five major approaches to curriculum presently accepted in American schools. The first, called by the educationists "academic rationalism," (they shy from remembering the term Liberal Arts), includes all those curricula that we would call Liberal Arts curricula, emphasizing the learning and mastery of a set body of knowledge and skills derived from the past, a love for the good and the true, and the character formation necessary to accomplish that mastery. The other four, (cognitive process development, instruction as a technology, social reconstruction, and self-actualization), all fall in one way or the other into the category of social engineering, whose concern is not acquiring skills and knowledge, or self-control, but formation (or deformation) of the pupil's personality and character to some model preconceived and prescribed by the authorities. They are methods not of education, but of imposition of the teacher's will on the student.

Dr. Rollin Lasseter

Published online in the *Catholic Institute for Liberal Education*, 12/09.



Religious Education in Schools Fits into the Evangelizing Mission of the Church

VATICAN CITY, SEPT. 8, 2009 (Zenit.org). Here is the letter the Congregation for Catholic Education sent to the presidents of the bishops' conferences on the topic of religious education in schools. The letter was published today.

Your Eminence/Excellency,

The nature and role of religious education in schools has become the object of debate. In some cases, it is now the object of new civil regulations, which tend to replace religious education with teaching about the religious phenomenon in a multi-denominational sense, or about religious ethics and culture even in a way that contrasts with the choices and educational aims that parents and the Church intend for the formation of young people.

Therefore, by means of this Circular Letter addressed to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences, this Congregation for Catholic Education deems it necessary to recall some principles that are rooted in Church teaching, as clarification and instruction about the role of schools in the Catholic formation of young people, about the nature and identity of the Catholic school, about religious education in schools, and about the freedom of choice of school and confessional religious education.

I. The role of schools in the Catholic formation of new generations

1. Education today is a complex task, which is made more difficult by rapid social, economic, and cultural changes. Its specific

mission remains the integral formation of the human person. Children and young people must be guaranteed the possibility of developing harmoniously their own physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual gifts, and they must also be helped to develop their sense of responsibility, learn the correct use of freedom, and participate actively in social life (cf. c. 795 Code of Canon Law [CIC]; c. 629 Code of Canons for the Eastern Churches [CCEO]). A form of education that ignores or marginalises the moral and religious dimension of the person is a hindrance to full education, because "children and young people have a right to be motivated to appraise moral values with a right conscience, to embrace them with a personal adherence, together with a deeper knowledge and love of God." That is why the Second Vatican Council asked and recommended, "all those who hold a position of public authority or who are in charge of education to see to it that youth is never deprived of this sacred right" (Declaration Gravissimum educationis [GE] 1).

2. Such education requires the contribution of many agents of education.

Parents, having given life to their children, are their primary and principal educators (cf. GE 3; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris consortio [FC], 22 November 1981, 36; c. 793 CIC; c. 627 CCEO). For that reason, it is the responsibility of Catholic parents to look after the Christian education of their children (c. 226 CIC; c. 627 CCEO). In this primary task, parents need the subsidiary help of civil society and



other institutions. Indeed, "the family is the primary, but not the only and exclusive educating community" (FC 40; cfr GE 3).

3. "Among all educational instruments the school has a special importance" (GE 5), as it is "the principal assistance to parents in fulfilling the function of education" (c. 796 CIC), particularly in order to favour the transmission of culture and education for co-existence. In this educational setting and in conformity with international legislation and human rights "the right of parents to choose an education in conformity with their religious faith must be absolutely guaranteed" (FC 40). Catholic parents "are to entrust their children to those schools which provide a Catholic education" (c. 798 CIC) and, when this is not possible, they must provide for their Catholic education in other ways (cf. *ibidem*).

4. The Second Vatican Council "reminds parents of the duty that is theirs to arrange and even demand" for their children to be able to receive a moral and religious education "and advance in their Christian formation to a degree that is abreast of their development in secular subjects. Therefore the Church esteems highly those civil authorities and societies which, bearing in mind the pluralism of contemporary society and respecting religious freedom, assist families so that the education of their children can be imparted in all schools according to the individual moral and religious principles of the families" (GE 7).

To sum up:

— Education today is a complex, vast, and urgent task. This complexity today risks making us lose what is essential, that is, the formation of the human person in

its totality, particularly as regards the religious and spiritual dimension.

— Although the work of educating is accomplished by different agents, it is parents who are primarily responsible for education.

— This responsibility is exercised also in the right to choose the school that guarantees an education in accordance with one's own religious and moral principles.

II. Nature and identity of the Catholic school: the right to a Catholic education for families and pupils: Subsidiarity and educational collaboration

5. The Catholic school plays a particular role in education and formation. Many communities and religious congregations have distinguished themselves, and commendably continue to devote themselves to the service of primary and secondary education. Yet the whole Christian community, and particularly the diocesan Ordinary, bear the responsibility "of arranging everything so that all the faithful have a Catholic education" (c. 794 CIC) and, more precisely, of having "schools which offer an education imbued with a Christian spirit" (c. 802 CIC; cfr c. 635 CCEO).

6. Catholic schools are characterised by the institutional link they keep with the Church hierarchy, which guarantees that the instruction and education be grounded in the principles of the Catholic faith and imparted by teachers of right doctrine and probity of life (cf. c. 803 CIC; cc. 632e 639 CCEO). In these educational centres which are open to all who share and respect their educational goals the atmosphere must be permeated by the evangelical spirit of freedom and charity, which fosters the harmonious development



of each one's personality. In this setting, human culture as a whole is harmonised with the message of salvation, so that the pupils gradually acquire a knowledge of the world, life and humanity that is be enlightened by the Gospel (cf. GE 8; c. 634 CCEO).

7. In this way, the right of families and pupils to an authentic Catholic education is ensured and, at the same time, the cultural aims as well as those of human and academic formation of young people that are characteristic of any school, are fulfilled (cf. c. 634 CCEO; c.806 CIC).

8. Aware of how difficult this is today, it is to be hoped that the school and the family will be in harmony as regards the process of education and as regards the individual's formation. This will avoid tensions or rifts in the goals of education. Hence, close and active collaboration among parents, teachers and school authorities is needed. In this regards, it is appropriate to encourage means of parents' participation in school life: associations, meetings, etc. (cf. c. 796 CIC; c. 639 CCEO).

9. The freedom of parents, associations, and intermediate institutions as well as the Church hierarchy itself to promote schools of Catholic identity, constitutes an exercise of the principle of subsidiarity. This principle excludes any "kind of school monopoly, for this is opposed to the native rights of the human person, to the development and spread of culture, to the peaceful association of citizens and to the pluralism that exists today in ever so many societies" (GE 6).

To sum up:

— The Catholic school is truly an ecclesial subject because of its teaching activity, in which faith, culture, and life unite in harmony.

— It is open to all who want to share its educational goal inspired by Christian principles.

— The Catholic school is an expression of the ecclesial community, and its Catholicity is guaranteed by the competent authorities (Ordinary of the place).

— It ensures Catholic parents' freedom of choice and it is an expression of school pluralism.

— The principle of subsidiarity regulates collaboration between the family and the various institutions deputised to educate.

III. Religious education in schools

a) Nature and aims

10. A concept of the human person being open to the transcendent necessarily includes the element of religious education in schools: it is an aspect of the right to education (cf. c. 799 CIC). Without religious education, pupils would be deprived of an essential element of their formation and personal development, which helps them attain a vital harmony between faith and culture. Moral formation and religious education also foster the development of personal and social responsibility and the other civic virtues; they represent, therefore, an important contribution to the common good of society.

11. In a pluralistic society, the right to religious freedom requires both the assurance of the presence of religious education in schools and the guarantee that



such education be in accordance with parents' convictions. The Second Vatican Council reminds us: "Parents have the right to determine, in accordance with their own religious beliefs, the kind of religious education that their children are to receive. The rights of parents are violated, if their children are forced to attend lessons or instructions which are not in agreement with their religious beliefs, or if a single system of education, from which all religious formation is excluded, is imposed upon all" (Declaration *Dignitatis humanae* [DH] 5; cf. c. 799 CIC; Holy See, Charter of the rights of the family, 24 November 1983, art. 5, c-d). This statement finds confirmation in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art. 26) and in many other declarations and conventions of the international community.

12. The marginalization of religious education in schools is equivalent to assuming at least in practice an ideological position that can lead pupils into error or do them a disservice. Moreover, if religious education is limited to a presentation of the different religions, in a comparative and "neutral" way, it creates confusion or generates religious relativism or indifferentism. In this respect, Pope John Paul II explained: "The question of Catholic education includes religious education in the more general milieu of school, whether it be Catholic or State-run. The families of believers have the right to such education; they must have the guarantee that the State school precisely because it is open to all not only will not put their children's faith in peril, but will rather complete their integral formation with appropriate religious education. This principle must be included within the concept of religious freedom and of the truly democratic State, which as such that is, in obedience to its deepest and truest nature puts itself at the service of the

citizens, of all citizens, in respect for their rights and their religious convictions" (Speech to the Cardinals and collaborators of the Roman Curia, 28 June 1984, unofficial translation).

13. Based on what has been said, it is clear that teaching the Catholic religion has its own specific nature vis-a-vis other school subjects. In fact, as the Second Vatican Council explains, "Government therefore ought indeed to take account of the religious life of the citizenry and show it favor, since the function of government is to make provision for the common welfare. However, it would clearly transgress the limits set to its power, were it to presume to command or inhibit acts that are religious" (DH3).

For these reasons, it is for the Church to establish the authentic contents of Catholic religious education in schools. This guarantees, for both parents and the pupils themselves, that the education presented as Catholic is indeed authentic.

14. The Church identifies this task as its own, *ratione materiae*, and claims it for its own competence, regardless of the nature of the school (State-run or non-State-run, Catholic or non-Catholic) in which such teaching is given. Therefore, "The Catholic religious instruction and education which are imparted in any schools whatsoever are subject to the authority of the Church []. It is for the conference of bishops to issue general norms about this field of action and for the diocesan bishop to regulate and watch over it" (c. 804 CIC; cf. also, c. 636 CCEO).

b) Religious education in Catholic schools



15. Religious education in Catholic schools identifies the educational goals of such schools. In fact, "the special character of the Catholic school, the underlying reason for it, the reason why Catholic parents should prefer it, is precisely the quality of the religious instruction integrated into the education of the pupils" (John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, 16 October 1979, 69).

16. In Catholic schools, as everywhere else, the religious freedom of non-Catholic pupils must be respected. This clearly does not affect the right/duty of the Church "in [its] public teaching and witness to [its] faith, whether by the spoken or by the written word", taking into account that "in spreading religious faith and in introducing religious practices everyone ought at all times to refrain from any manner of action which might seem to carry a hint of coercion or of a kind of persuasion that would be dishonorable or unworthy" (DH 4).

c) Catholic religious education from the point of view of culture, and its relationship with catechesis

17. Religious education in schools fits into the evangelizing mission of the Church. It is different from, and complementary to, parish catechesis and other activities such as family Christian education or initiatives of ongoing formation of the faithful. Apart from the different settings in which these are imparted, the aims that they pursue are also different: catechesis aims at fostering personal adherence to Christ and the development of Christian life in its different aspects (cf. Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis [DGC], 15 August 1997, nn.80-87), whereas religious education in schools gives the pupils knowledge about Christianity's identity and

Christian life. Moreover, Pope Benedict XVI, speaking to religion teachers, pointed out the need "to enlarge the area of our rationality, to reopen it to the larger questions of the truth and the good, to link theology, philosophy and science between them in full respect for the methods proper to them and for their reciprocal autonomy, but also in the awareness of the intrinsic unity that holds them together. The religious dimension is in fact intrinsic to culture. It contributes to the overall formation of the person and makes it possible to transform knowledge into wisdom of life." Catholic religious education contributes to that goal, in which "school and society are enriched with true laboratories of culture and humanity in which, by deciphering the significant contribution of Christianity, the person is equipped to discover goodness and to grow in responsibility, to seek comparisons and to refine his or her critical sense, to draw from the gifts of the past to understand the present better and to be able to plan wisely for the future" (Address to the Catholic religion teachers, 25 April 2009).

18. The specific nature of this education does not cause it to fall short of its proper nature as a school discipline. On the contrary, maintaining this status is a condition of its effectiveness: "It is necessary, therefore, that religious instruction in schools appear as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigour as other disciplines. It must present the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness and the same depth with which other disciplines present their knowledge. It should not be an accessory alongside of these disciplines, but rather it should engage in a necessary inter-disciplinary dialogue" (DGC 73).



To sum up:

— Religious nature is the foundation and guarantee of the presence of religious education in the scholastic public sphere.

— Its cultural condition is a vision of the human person being open to the transcendent.

— Religious education in Catholic schools is an inalienable characteristic of their educational goal.

— Religious education is different from, and complementary to, catechesis, as it is school education that does not require the assent of faith, but conveys knowledge on the identity of Christianity and Christian life. Moreover, it enriches the Church and humanity with areas for growth, of both culture and humanity.

IV. Educational freedom, religious freedom, and Catholic education

19. In short, the right of parents and pupils to education and religious freedom are concretely exercised through:

a) freedom of choice of school. "Parents who have the primary and inalienable right and duty to educate their children must enjoy true liberty in their choice of schools. Consequently, the public power, which has the obligation to protect and defend the rights of citizens, must see to it, in its concern for distributive justice, that public subsidies are paid out in such a way that parents are truly free to choose according to their conscience the schools they want for their children" (GE 6; cf. DH 5; c.797 CIC; c. 627 CCEO).

b) The freedom to receive confessional religious education in schools, integrating one's own religious tradition into the school's cultural and academic formation. "The Christian faithful are to strive so that in civil society the laws which regulate the formation of youth also provide for their religious and moral education in the schools themselves, according to the conscience of the parents" (c. 799 CIC; cf. GE 7, DH 5). In fact, the Catholic religious instruction and education which are imparted in any school are subject to the authority of the Church (cf. c. 804 CIC; c. 636 CCEO).

The Church is aware that in many places, now as in earlier periods, religious freedom is not fully in force, both in law and in practice (cf. DH 13). In these circumstances, the Church does her best to offer the faithful the formation they need (cf. GE 7; c. 798 CIC; c. 637 CCEO). At the same time, in keeping with her mission (cf. Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 76), she never stops denouncing the Injustice that takes place when Catholic pupils and their families are deprived of their educational rights and their educational freedom is affected. She urges all the faithful to commit themselves so that those rights may become effective (cf. c. 799 CIC).

This Congregation for Catholic Education is certain that the above-mentioned principles can contribute to finding ever-greater consonance between the educational task, which is an essential part of the mission of the Church and the aspiration of Nations to develop a society that is fair and respectful of each person's dignity.

For her part, the Church, exercising the diakonia of truth in the midst of humanity, offers to each generation the revelation of



God from which it can learn the ultimate truth about life and the end of history. This is not an easy task in a secularized world, characterised by the fragmentation of knowledge and moral confusion. It involves the whole Christian community and constitutes a challenge for educators. We are sustained, in any case, by the certainty that as Pope Benedict XVI affirms "the noble goals of [...] education, founded on the unity of truth and in service of the person and the community, become an especially powerful instrument of hope" (Address to Catholic educators, 17 April 2008).

We request Your Eminence/Excellency to make the content of this Circular Letter known to all those concerned with the educational service and mission of the Church. We now thank you for your kind attention and, in communion of prayer with Mary, Mother and Teacher of educators, we take the opportunity to express our sentiments of highest esteem, consideration and respect, remaining

Yours in the Lord,
Zenon Card. GROCHOLEWSKI, Prefect
+Jean-Louis BRUGUES, O.P., Secretary



Catechesis by Rosary

Consider the rosary as a catechetical tool. This thought arises from many bishops and lay catechists and all the religious and lay educator groups in between.

Religious educators and parents often comment that many today – youth and adults – are lacking in Christian formation. A certain religious illiteracy has infiltrated the family, school, and society in general. Children especially lack a strong basic understanding of fundamentals of our faith and of how to pray. The challenge is clear for catechists at all age levels. In addition, we must remember that faith and virtue are caught more than taught. We must model what we teach. We must echo Christ; resound faith, hope, and charity by walking the talk.

Catechists and parents often seek new methods, programs, and books of religious instruction, and we are at a loss for knowing any. But one sure-fired and time-tested method is centuries old, tried and true, and easy to handle – the rosary.

If youngsters and adults learn the rosary, they are learning the basics of the Christian faith as well as learning how to pray. They would know from memory the *Apostles' Creed*, the *Our Father*, the *Hail Mary*, and the *Glory Be* – the latter three lifted literally from the Gospel. By praying the rosary they would be reviewing the fundamental truths handed on by Jesus and practicing the art of praying. By teaching the rosary we help others to learn that prayer is simple, Biblical, done in union with our Mother Mary, and leads us to become absorbed in the mysteries of the life of Christ and of salvation history.

To know how to pray the twenty mysteries of the rosary means that we know the basics about the life of Jesus and his teachings – his life, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension; the meaning of Jesus' Incarnation and Redemption. This challenges us to ponder what these mysteries mean for us today. In reality the rosary is a compendium of the Gospel; it is the Gospel strung on beads.

The rosary is not a panacea; it does not solve all the challenges of catechesis and faith formation. But it is one effective catechetical tool for teaching and praying. In the past noted saints and teachers have utilized it successfully. It worked for St. Dominic and his companions in combating the Albigensian heresy in his day.

Let's try again.

Brother John M. Samaha, S.M.



The Role of the Shadow Curriculum in Achieving the *Pax Academica*

When the organizers of this conference asked me for my academic title, I replied that “mother” was fine, or “Mrs.” I added that they could add “Old Wife” behind my name although I hoped that I would not be telling “old wives’ tales.”

As a wife and a mother, mine is the voice of the family, crying for protection in an embattled society. I am charged with more than stoking the many fires of our clan-home; with my husband, we are defenders in the central keep of the Domestic Church. Our home, as any Christian home, is a sacramental, where our unique family is called, as stated in *Familiaris Consortio*, to become a community of love. The emphasis is on “love,” for it is only through love that any community can live in peace and happiness.

Despite all the broken families and all the attempts in these recent revolutionary years to redefine “family,” everyone knows what a family is: one man and one woman living faithfully together in a life-long union for the purpose of mutual help and to raise up good children. Extended family includes many others, but under the same clan umbrella. It is an inescapable fact that the family is the building block of society. It is the family though which “the future of mankind passes.”

In this, our ancient and essential task is not unlike — in mission at least — to the monastic life. In the sixth century St. Benedict wrote in his *Rule*: “We intend to establish a school for the Lord’s service. In drawing up its regulations, we hope to set down nothing harsh, nothing burdensome. The good of all concerned, however, may

prompt us to a little strictness in order to amend faults and to safe guard love.”

If our homes are to become missionary outposts of the universal church and if our Catholic universities are to teach *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, then there could be no better mission statement than St. Benedict’s for establishing policies at all levels.

Once before, many years ago, I served as “the voice of the family” on the staff of a major seminary. While there I often told seminarians caught in a spiritual quagmire that they needed to go clean up their rooms before we talked about their problems or difficulties. Practical cleaning influences spiritual housekeeping; so in the seminary, so in the home, and so in the university — *urbi et orbi!*

I am here this morning, once again as the voice of the family, to talk about how the shadow curriculum affects the *Pax Domestica* as well as the *Pax Academica*, for both are in need of the peace that can be achieved only through clear and unprejudiced thinking about policies that affect student life. Just as the health of the body affects the health of the mind, and *vice versa* in the individual, so also the peace and effectiveness of education — at every level — interconnects with, depends upon, and influences the peace of the home and family.

What, then, is this “shadow curriculum” that is so destructive of peace — familial and academic? The shadow curriculum is those unstated but enforced expectations, set forth by an unspoken ideology; most often that ideology is radical nihilism, but it drags secular materialism in its tow. The shadow curriculum reveals itself and imposes itself



on faculty and students through the intellectual, cultural, social, and religious influences geared towards shaping the formation of students in all areas of life. Two simple examples that reveal the nature of a shadow curriculum's agenda imposing itself on others are activities of freshman orientation and dormitory management, where campus environmental raunchiness is at its most noxious.

The shadow curriculum is quick to recruit incoming freshmen. In their first week on the campus, the students are regularly inducted into the unspoken social expectations of the university, to which a king's ransom is being paid in tuition for a "good education." There are "AIDS awareness" programs, supposedly for distribution of condoms and graphic instruction in their use, but in reality "AIDS" education is homosexual recruiting, sponsored by the Lesbian-Bisexual-Gay-People's-Union on campus. There is "rape awareness" for women, where packets are given out that have the lists of what constitutes rape on a date – and how to be sure that "no means no" when there are no restrictions on male presence, day or night, in the dorms. Then, the professional managers of freshman orientation week are hired to come onto the scene to run the "ice-breakers." The ice-breakers involve chummy contact – sitting in a circle and giving "the person on your left" a backrub – or telling in a group-confessional of "the worst thing I've ever done." This serves to break down the natural reluctance one has with strangers, without building community in any positive way. Last month, one of the Midwest colleges had vagina-shaped chocolate given out during freshman orientation to give the message to the freshmen that "our bodies are not something to be ashamed of." The real message is

disgustingly obvious, and it is not that about the dignity of the body.

Beginning with the cultural revolution of the 1960s and 70s, the shadow curriculum began to take over campuses when students were incited to reject and ridicule all authority as oppressive and outworn morality. "Don't trust anyone over 30" and "Hey, ho! Western Civ has got to go!" became the chants of the revolution. Many of those 1960s and 70s radicals became and remain tenured heads of departments, deans of schools, presidents of universities, and, alas, school chaplains. From these positions of power, they defend their nihilistic fiefdoms in the name of academic freedom. In the face of this strong opposition at the top, all normal and healthy efforts to clean up the cultural environment has been stymied. Nowhere else but on the campus has this kind of social coercion survived.

If there exists an unbaptized "shadow curriculum" which opposes the family's values, what could be a family's interest in the university that imposes it? Is there any good reason for parents to write a king's ransom in tuition checks to an institution if four years later – with diploma in hand – their progeny is shredded morally, "stuck on stupid" (to quote Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré, speaking recently to a persistent journalist), and unfit for a proper vocation, be it marriage and family life, the priesthood and religious life, or the chaste single life?

Take the prevalence of unisex bathrooms and coed dormitories, which have become standard fixtures at secular universities and, alas, at some Catholic universities. What message about the "theology of the body" is delivered when, side-by-side, freshman men and women are forced to shower, shave, and defecate in the same bathroom facility? How



does chastity have even a “Hail Mary chance” when open visitation and coed dormitories, often room by room on the same floor, sets up an expectation of the big easy, the most casual of sexual encounters. These are inescapable situations where freshmen are required – as they usually are – to live on campus and forced to conform in the name of building “campus community.”

And it is not just heterosexual activity that is endorsed and enabled. One of our sons was forced to spend the better part of his first semester at a well-known university in Virginia sleeping in the lounge because his 17-year old roommate was using their dormitory room for prostitution. The residence advisor, only two years older than the freshmen he supposedly supervised, warned our son not to mention the homosexual issue when he requested a room change. Mandatory “sensitivity training” sessions were required for anybody who appeared homophobic, or who objected to “diversity” and “self-determination.”

I do not need to name the whole rogues gallery of P.C. ideologies and thought police on campus – deconstructionism, atheism, nihilism, radical feminism, secular humanism, materialism, communism. All are clashes of non-Christian or anti-Christian ideologies that spread through the shadow curriculum.

A young Jewish woman, Wendy Shalit, wrote a book *Return to Modesty* in which she defends the older ideal of modesty and attacks the sexual revolution for its ruinous effects on her generation. Recently, she wrote a review for the Wall Street Journal of a book by Ariel Levy entitled *Female Chauvinist Pigs*; the conclusion of the review is remarkably insightful. Miss Shalit

writes, “It may be that, like Ms. Levy, a lot of feminists now regret getting in bed with Mr. Hefner. Yet if you mention the word ‘modesty’ within 20 feet of them their heads spin around like Linda Blair in ‘The Exorcist.’ This is where they get stuck... Such a girl requires...a compelling alternative to the Female Chauvinist Pig. Otherwise she may well give in to social pressure – not to mention professorial nonsense – and then wonder what’s wrong with her when she is not happy with the pig in her bed or the pig she has become.” (WSJ, September 21, 2005)

Beginning with the cultural revolution of the 1960s and 70s, a fear of imposing parietals was accompanied by the exaltation of liberty and the pursuit of happiness over the other inalienable right to life. This four-decade-long silence about the relation of daily behavior to intellectual development has done service to no one. Only the faintest attention has been given to the relation between campus policies and dormitory life and the psychological health and spiritual growth of the teenage students, who are forced to cope with a very contaminated environment. Yet, in recent days certain legal precedents have begun to force the issue.

Last week, in an article titled, “*In Loco Parentis* Goes Loco,” the Wall Street Journal’s opinion page addressed one of the effects of the shadow curriculum that was first begun in the 1970s —the protection of the student’s “privacy.” The issue involved irate parents who are not allowed to see their over-18 children’s grades, nor be informed of their offspring’s health and behavior issues. The matter, which began as a divisive shadow curriculum agenda, the “right to privacy,” concerns more than a toe-off of “liberated young adult” vs. parents. It



now has become an arena for other legal battles, played out over issues of student suicide and self-destructive behavior: “Angry phone calls from parents, or from their lawyers, now bring demands that schools protect children from their own bad habits. Johnny got drunk on an alcohol-free campus or didn’t earn enough credits to graduate with his class? That’s not his fault anymore; it’s the school’s. Caught in a double-bind after an era when privacy and autonomy concerns ruled, colleges can safely respond to the modern understanding of *in loco parentis* only by spending more for legal advice and intensified campus counseling programs. Parents who complain about higher tuition bills – or missing report cards – are the least of an administrator’s worries these days.” (WSJ, September 23, 2005)

I have focused up to now on the negative aspects of the shadow curriculum as we have seen it in action. It is a powerful tool in the formation of the young person, and while it has been a destructive tool, it need not remain destructive and “in the shadows.” Where it supports the mission of the university and the expectations of the families behind the students, “parallel curriculum,” not shadow, might be a more accurate name.

If the truth of the academic curriculum is to succeed, as hoped, and if the joy of learning is to be realized, then the implementation of the parallel curriculum at a Catholic college must not be ignored. Incoming students with their varied backgrounds, can be put into core curriculum classes and read the Great Books; but if the student life demands community-life-as-barnyard, then there can be no receptivity, no harmony, and no peace for the students, though they read ABOUT

the best and highest ideals that the world has to offer.

The Catholic university has a mission to pass along the vision of greatness to its students, and the parallel curriculum can serve as a powerful support system to the academic life of a university, as well as a strong corrective to the “shadow curriculum” already at work in the high schools from which the incoming freshmen come.

In addressing the challenge of setting up a “parallel curriculum,” the university officials – admissions, administration, and student life – should try to think clearly about what they are doing: Why do they exist? Whom are they serving? What sort of adult graduate do they want to send forth?

Everyone comes to the university for different reasons. If there are 5,000 students enrolled in a university, there will be 5,000 different backgrounds – and not just family backgrounds. Parochial, public, private and home schools have prepared their students in vastly different ways.

For instance, the increasingly huge public high schools – many with more than 5,000 students – march the teenagers for the better part of each day through an impersonal, crowded environment that would not be tolerated, even as it is not even to be found, elsewhere in our society. Moreover, the students are held to few requirements of achievement, conduct, or dress. They are told, on the one hand that they are marvelous and talented individuals, but this is snatched back from them by the rat-race in which they are forced to move for eight hours daily. The teachers seem always concerned with developing self-esteem, but give the kids no proper standards by which they can achieve a better opinion of



themselves. Shunning academic discipline and accomplishment, accolades are given for nothing in particular. In fact, the entire public school message to the students is dehumanizing: you have no worth, you are just a number, you are not to be trusted; survive if you can but abandon all hope of love, beauty and peace.

That bitter message is either perpetuated in institutions of higher education or else it is countered by a strong and united effort of Catholic formation. By what the school chooses to put in place as policy for student life, Catholic colleges and universities have the opportunity to have a happier alternative. Even though a distorted message may have been given in high school, it need not continue in a Catholic college. “They did WHAT in high school? Well, we have a better idea here than THAT.”

To claim, as is often heard, that we “cannot legislate morality,” is to deny not only the effort that teachers give to preparation for their classes, but also the very reason for a university’s existence. Professors assume in their own classes that form is content and that form is formative. They assume that their example will be normative and corrective. And the strict protection of “intellectual property” and punishment of plagiarism speaks of honesty and diligence where understanding and calculation are not possible. If the conditions in which students live are of no consequence, then it would be foolish to teach them — or even want them to study — the humanities at all, as there would be no point in demanding the study of these very subjects draws on human situations and have their effect on life. If the intellectual arguments and explanations of university disciplines had no effect on those elements of the mind that shape and arrange

life, there would be no point in demanding any standards.

Taking only the matter of academic performance, Catholic institutions do not hesitate to lead and to set forth the university’s mission. Why then not take the lead in moral formation as well? To think about the academic performance of students requires taking some stance towards influencing the moral life of students — not perhaps their sexual morals, but certainly their intellectual ones. Honesty, responsibility, perseverance, self-control, intelligence, practical wisdom, scientific knowledge, and theoretical wisdom are all virtues that the university assumes, but responsibility and self-discipline, practical wisdom and intelligence in social and personal morality are also imperatives that the whole operation of a university or any school must be concerned to promote.

When the Catholic university has reclaimed its vision of greatness, it becomes what it is meant to be: a truly sacramental institution where every discipline is seen in the light of Christ. In this sacramental vision — where all of creation is known to reflect the glory of God — the university will blaze with the light of Truth and find its joy.

The Good News, coming straight from the heart of the Church, can restore the joy of everyone — students and faculty. All can then dive straight into the clear waters of real academic excellence where learning can be “pure intellectual light infused with love.” That’s the mission of every Catholic institution, and therein lies the greatness to which we are called. The really Good News in education is Catholic to its core — that we are made in the image and likeness of God. The message — that we have a mission in



this world and a hope for eternal life in the next – simply flames with the Glory.

There is no neutrality on the matter of the “parallel curriculum”. Neutrality on moral issues is an illusion of the past, and to avoid the issues involved is to ensure that undesirable ones continue to tyrannize. Ours is no longer a safe, happy, stable, and conventional society. As unhappy social trends have shown – and as the war on terror has become a vivid backdrop to all of our activity – neglect, ambiguity of signal, or mere indifference is as much a formative influence as conscious interference. If by its “parallel curriculum” and policies a university does not express explicit approval for right living, it gives tacit approval for wrong.

In choosing a college with their adult children, parents should ask three questions of any institution – and the university authorities should seriously take these questions into account in setting up their parallel curriculum:

- What secular influences are permitted and encouraged on campus?
- What sort of living environment awaits incoming freshmen?
- What is the character and quality of the adult citizens that this university sends forth to form the families and direct the institutions of our future?

These questions define the unspoken mission of the university and decide its attitudes. These questions are, in the long run, far more important than simply “Can we afford it?”

There are so many positive “parallel curriculum” policies that I, as a parent, could suggest to the administration of a

Catholic university, but time is up. Besides, I do not want to conclude these reflections with a “nanny scold” – not even to have the satisfaction of giving the suggestions and advice that all mothers love to impart!

My advice would be to consider the wisdom of the *Rule* and translate its ancient recommendations into a modern parallel curriculum. Following St. Benedict’s guidelines, the university rules should not be harsh or burdensome. But “to safeguard love,” these policies – set forth for “the good of all concerned” – should promote a true community of learners and protect the great dignity of the human person. The guidelines should be based on safety of the students, practical intelligence, concern for the common good – including the good of the family and greater society.

I want to conclude by reading a passage from the late English detective novelist, Christian apologist, and Dante scholar, Dorothy L. Sayers. In this passage from her novel, *Gaudy Night*, Sayers wrote about the Oxford of the 1930s and the mission of a university:

The Warden rapped upon the table. A welcome silence fell upon the Hall. A speaker was rising to propose the toast of the university.

She spoke gravely, unrolling the great scroll of history, pleading for the Humanities, proclaiming the Pax Academica to a world terrified with unrest. “Oxford has been called the home of lost causes: if the love of learning for its own sake is a lost cause everywhere else in the world, let us see to it that here at least, it finds its abiding home.” Magnificent, thought Harriet, but it is not war. And then, her imagination, weaving in and out of the spoken words, she saw it as a



Holy War... defenders in the central keep of Man-soul, their personal differences forgotten in face of a common foe... one could realize that one was a citizen of no mean city...her foundations were set upon the holy hills, and her spires touched heaven.

Like Sayers' England of the late 1930s, our world, too, is terrified with unrest. Now more than ever, our children need the *Pax Academica* that can be achieved only by dispelling the darkness of heart and mind and establishing a beautiful and harmonious parallel curriculum in our Catholic institutions.

Dr. Ruth D. Lasseter
30 September 2005
N.D. Ethics and Culture



What Is Catholic Liberal Education?

Catholic

...Catholic education has suffered no less – perhaps even more – than secular education from the decline of classical studies and the loss of the old humanist culture. This was the keystone of the whole educational structure, and when it was removed the higher studies of theology and philosophy became separated from the world of specialist and vocational studies which inevitably absorb the greater part of the time and money and personnel of the modern university.

The Catholic Church embraced classical education in the early Middle Ages, incorporating it into monastic, ecclesiastical and, eventually, secular life. In one form or another, from the Benedictine monasteries to the medieval universities to the Jesuit's Ratio Studiorum, Liberal Education has traditionally been the core of Catholic education. The goals of classical education – perfecting the natural powers of the mind while embracing and developing a tradition – coalesced perfectly with the incarnational, traditional and pilgrimatic understanding of Christian life.

Liberal Education occurs within a tradition of learning and culture. The Greeks learned Homer and the poets, the laws and the histories. These contained the best and most beautiful accounts of the good, the beautiful and the true. Becoming conversant with these texts made the young accustomed to the most noble and challenging of ideas; he became a fellow in the highest society, one fit at some level to listen to, question, and even develop these great men.

For Catholics, the Catholic Tradition is our tradition. Catholic educators aim to make

their students conversant with our comprehensive theological, apologetical, philosophical, aesthetic traditions. Liberally educated Catholics develop an admiration for, a confidence in that Tradition, in its power to stimulate and satisfy the mind and heart, in its strength to foster, accept and patiently answer the most searching questions, in its wisdom that emphasizes the beauty of life without hiding its evils, in its dynamic humility, which accepts the truth from whatever source it is found.

Catholic Liberal Education is Catholic in its inspiration, resources and direction. It begins in faith and seeks understanding under the guidance of the Church's Magisterium and through the rich patrimony of the Church's intellectual, spiritual and cultural tradition. It is also Catholic in its willingness to learn, within the boundaries of faith, from any source of wisdom – Christian or pagan, ancient or modern.

For as education reaches a certain point of development, it opens up new and wider cultural horizons. It ceases to be a utilitarian parochial effort for the maintenance of a minimum standard of religious instruction and becomes the gateway to the wider kingdom of Catholic culture which has two thousand years of tradition behind it and is literally world-wide in its extent and scope.

Liberal

*But I observed that even the good artisans fell into the same error as the poets; because they were good workmen they thought that they also knew all sorts of high matters, and this defect in them overshadowed their wisdom.... Socrates, *The Apology**



What would you do if money were not a concern? If you had an infinite supply of money? For better or worse, that is not the lot of most of us. Most of our lives are dictated by the necessities of living. That thought dominates most of our educational institutions. What kind of job will our students be able to get, and how much will they make for it? How can we prepare them for the best and highest-paying jobs? This worldly focus has its successes, but also its price. Time and again, great thinkers have warned that minds limited to the necessities of life will tend to judge all things by that measure.

Were I a mere chemist, I should deny the influence of mind upon bodily health; and so on, as regards the devotees of any science, or family of sciences, to the exclusion of others; they necessarily become bigots and quacks, scorning all principles and reported facts which do not belong to their own pursuit, and thinking to effect everything without aid from any other quarter.

But if our students were truly free of worry about necessities, how would we educate them? Liberal education, in one fundamental sense, is the answer to that question. “Liberal” means free, and Liberal Education is what is proper for the free man. The man who is free, as the aristocrats of pre-modern societies were, wants what is desirable for its own sake, not what is essentially a means to something else. But what is that?

In the history of education, two different but not incompatible answers have been given. For some, the best kind of life is that which is most fully human, a life of full participation in and even leadership of society. The man who through his understanding and prudence and speech can guide his city or nation through difficult times to the most happy and prosperous state

receives the highest admiration and honor and thanksgiving. He understands the deepest values of his society; he is equipped to arouse his countrymen to awareness of dangers and devotion to the good.

For others, the best kind of life is that which is most nearly divine, one not devoted to making and doing but to understanding and loving and wondering. The man who looks beyond his society to the great order of creation, to the Creator Himself, who questions the customs of his upbringing to determine that which is good in itself, who seeks knowledge of what transcends the ordinary lives of men, is the truly admirable man.

Educators have agreed, with varying emphases, that adequate training in the arts of language and mathematics is essential for both kinds of life. Called the Trivium and Quadrivium, these arts made up the backbone of Liberal Arts education. Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric formed men who were masters of the spoken word, who readily understood what was said and unsaid, who knew their own minds and could share them effectively with others. Geometry, Arithmetic, Astronomy and Music introduced young minds to truths outside of the mind. Beyond these basic arts, the liberally educated man was introduced to the finest ideas of his culture through his study of literature, history and the fine arts, while he tested the soundness of these ideas through philosophy.

This education is not only proper to a man with time on his hands; it also made him more free, free to be the best man he could be – free from the interior confusion of scattered experiences and opinions, free to express himself fully, free to understand and weigh the greatest and most beautiful thoughts of man.



Hence it is that his education is called "Liberal." A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are, freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom.

So Liberal Education is finally also the most practical for those who are capable of it. For it prepares a man to be, not a carpenter or a teamster, a chemist or an historian, nor even a lawyer or doctor or politician, but to be the best man he can be. And the best man will live the best life and, as a bonus, will also frequently be the best suited to acquire the habits of management and planning that businesses seek after.

Gentlemen, I will show you how a liberal education is truly and fully a useful, though it be not a professional, education. Good is not only good, but reproductive of good; this is one of its attributes; nothing is excellent, beautiful, perfect, desirable for its own sake, but it overflows, and spreads the likeness of itself all around it.

Education

No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends....

“You can’t teach an old dog new tricks”, but you can teach a young dog new tricks. Dogs and horses and dolphins can be trained. People can, too. An office clerk is trained to use the filing system; a soldier is trained to fire a rifle and dig trenches. But you can’t educate a dog or horse or dolphin. Education implies much more than training or even teaching, something that is properly human.

When a dog is trained to roll over on command or a dolphin to jump through hoops, nobody bothers to explain to the animal why it is being asked to do this.

Training a cashier or even an accountant is similar – do the math, don’t ask questions.

Education doesn’t aim at simply accomplishing a task; its goal is understanding. Nurses might be trained to wash a patient’s wounds, and administer medication, but a doctor needs to understand what makes a body healthy, and how the body works, in order to best determine how to bring about health in his patient.

Training is entirely appropriate for many tasks. But when attorneys are trained to win cases without considering justice; when bureaucrats are trained to follow countless rules without learning prudence; when doctors are trained to manipulate the body without considering its proper functions; when generals are trained to kill without considering nobility; then society will reap the bitter fruits of having failed to educate its citizens.

Education presupposes and builds on training. Learning the alphabet, memorizing Latin paradigms, repetitious practice of scales are necessary for Dickens, Cicero and Mozart. Educators need to recognize when they are training students and when they are educating them. Have standardized tests reduced history class to a memory drill of names, dates and facts? Or are my students coming to understand the motives, the ideas that have shaped great events? Do they understand why George Washington was admirable? Will they recognize the next Napoleon or Lenin, or the conditions that might produce him? Are they learning to raise probing questions about the historical interpretations that are being presented to them? Scantrons don’t answer such questions.

But education is a higher word [than instruction]; it implies an action upon our mental nature, and the formation of a



character; it is something individual and permanent, and is commonly spoken of in connexion with religion and virtue. When, then, we speak of the communication of Knowledge as being Education, we thereby really imply that that Knowledge is a state or condition of mind.... Newman, *Idea of a University*.

Education above all aims at developing the proper habits of mind. It takes patience, prudence, and prayer. Facts will be forgotten after the exam is passed; education provides the foundations for a lifetime of growth.

Dr. Andrew T. Seeley



New Campaign Launched to Seat One Million Hispanic Children in Catholic Schools

On Dec. 12, a national task force commissioned by the University of Notre Dame will release a report and launch a campaign to improve educational opportunities for the next generation of American Latinos by expanding their access to Catholic schools.

Through the efforts of “The Catholic School Advantage: The Campaign to Improve Educational Opportunities for Latino Children,” the task force will seek to enroll 1 million Hispanic students in Catholic schools by 2020.

The report, titled “To Nurture the Soul of a Nation: Latino Families, Catholic Schools, and Educational Opportunity,” will be distributed to a national audience of 10,000 stakeholders on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, exactly one year after the task force was established by Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C., Notre Dame’s president.

The committee was co-chaired by Juliet V. Garcia, president of the University of Texas at Brownsville, and Rev. Joseph Corpora, C.S.C., director of university-school partnerships for Notre Dame’s Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE), and included more than 50 national leaders from the Latino community, the Catholic Church, academia, government, business, philanthropy and K-12 education.

Nationwide, U.S. classrooms have seen rapid growth in the number of Latino students, but research shows American schools are not serving these children well, and Latinos lag well behind their peers on most measures of educational achievement.

The task force report highlights research suggesting that Latino students who attend

Catholic schools enjoy a “Catholic school advantage” that helps to close the achievement gap, but the report notes that only 3 percent of Latino families send their children to Catholic schools.

“Much is at stake,” Garcia said, “no less than the future generation of leaders for our country. Catholic schools must remain a steady and strong conduit for the many new generations of Latinos at their doorstep.”

To improve educational outcomes for more Latino children, the task force will seek to double that percentage to 6 percent by 2020, which, given population growth estimates, will entail increasing the number of Latino children in Catholic schools from 290,000 to more than 1 million.

Members of the task force spent the past year conducting research and developing recommendations for schools, dioceses, Church leaders, the philanthropic community, civic organizations, policy-makers and institutions of higher education, ultimately publishing a report that provides a road map for reaching the task force’s enrollment goal.

While the task force noted that financial obstacles often are perceived to be the greatest barrier to enrolling more Latinos in Catholic schools, in reality there are information, cultural and leadership gaps that can be addressed in low-cost ways to increase demand and expand access to Catholic schools for this community.

To support the ongoing work of the task force, ACE, in collaboration with Notre Dame’s Institute for Latino Studies, will lead “The Catholic School Advantage”



campaign. Through this campaign, ACE and Notre Dame expect to forge partnerships with dioceses to implement task force recommendations in efforts to boost enrollment in Catholic schools located near growing Latino communities.

The Archdiocese of Chicago has agreed to join the campaign, and discussions are underway with five other (arch)dioceses that serve large Latino populations. The campaign will be led by Father Corpora, a former pastor with nearly 20 years of experience in parishes and schools effectively serving Latinos.

For some members of the task force, the connection to Latino Catholic schooling was deeply personal.

“Starting my education in a Catholic school changed the trajectory of my life. I want all Hispanic children to have that chance,” said task force member Sara Martinez Tucker, former under secretary of education in the U.S. Department of Education and a Notre Dame Trustee.

Other members of the task force echo Tucker’s commitment to the common good.

“We face an urgent moral imperative to serve our nation and our faith by making the Catholic school advantage accessible to millions of talented, under-served Latino children,” said Rev. Timothy R. Scully, C.S.C., founder of ACE and director of the Institute for Educational Initiatives at Notre Dame. “In doing so, the Catholic community will serve our nation and our faith. These schools will nurture souls but also, as Pope Benedict suggests, they will nurture the soul of our nation.”

Christian Dallavis and Julie Hail Flory •
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ND Newswire



