

# THE CATHOLIC EDUCATOR

*Quarterly Journal of the Catholic Education Foundation*



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**Volume 35 – Winter 2023**

## *A Word From Our Editor*

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June 21, 2022, will go down in American educational history as a banner-day for parental rights in education and for the full flowering of the free exercise of religion. On that date, the Supreme Court of the United States delivered its decision in [Carson v. Makin](#), a case originating in the State of Maine, concerned with its denial of tuition benefits for children attending faith-based private schools.

### **The Decision**

The case was decided by a 6-3 vote, with the majority opinion being written by Chief Justice John Roberts (concurring were: Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, Amy Coney Barrett). The dissenting opinion was offered by Justice Stephen Breyer, with Justice Elena Kagan and Justice Sonia Sotomayor (in part, with her own dissent).

It is interesting to note that all six “conservative” justices are products of Catholic schools; Gorsuch attended a Catholic school but is not a Catholic. Sotomayor is a graduate of schools of the Archdiocese of New York, however, she has distanced herself totally from Catholic positions (embarrassingly, when Cabrini High School [founded by none other than Saint Mother Cabrini!], was in dire straits, she never contributed a penny to its maintenance.)

### **Background of the Case and the Majority Opinion**

It may surprise some to learn that the State of Maine has numerous jurisdictions without secondary schools, given its very rural nature. As a result, the State forged a plan, whereby parents could “sign up” with nearby schools, both public and private, to provide for the education of their children – at the expense of the municipality where they lived. To qualify, a school must fulfill certain curriculum requirements, including use of English as the language of instruction, as well a course in “Maine history, including the Constitution of Maine . . . and Maine’s cultural and ethnic heritage,” and maintaining a student-teacher ratio of not more than 30 to 1.” The program is amazingly open-ended, imposing no geographic limitation, such that parents may designate tuition payments to schools inside or outside the State, or even in foreign countries.

The majority opinion notes: “Prior to 1981, parents could also direct the tuition assistance payments to religious schools. . . . That provision was enacted in response to an opinion by the Maine attorney general taking the position that public funding of private religious schools violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.” Such a position, however, was ruled to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in *Zelman* (2002), causing the Maine Legislature to consider rescinding its “nonsectarian” demand; the Legislature nonetheless stubbornly rejected that move.

The majority opinion offers the proximate origin of this case:

The Carsons sent their daughter to BCS (Bangor Christian Schools) because of the school’s high academic standards and because the school’s Christian worldview aligns with their sincerely held religious beliefs. . . . The Nelsons sent their son to Temple Academy because they believed it offered him a high-quality education that aligned with their sincerely held religious beliefs. While they wished to send their daughter to Temple Academy too, they could not afford to pay the cost of the Academy’s tuition for both of their children.

Further:

While petitioners’ appeal to the First Circuit was pending, this Court decided *Espinoza*. *Espinoza* held that a provision of the Montana Constitution barring government aid to any school “controlled in whole or in part by any church, sect, or denomination,” violated the Free Exercise Clause by prohibiting families from using otherwise available scholarship funds at the religious schools of their choosing.

And to the present case: “Maine bars BCS and Temple Academy from receiving funding ‘based on the religious use that they would make of it in instructing children.’” With no small degree of pique, Justice Roberts observes:

In particular, we have *repeatedly* held that a State violates the Free Exercise Clause when it excludes religious observers from otherwise available public benefits. See *Sherbert v. Verner*, 374 U. S. 398, 404 (1963) (“It is too late in the day to doubt that the liberties of religion and expression may be infringed by the denial of or placing of conditions upon a benefit or privilege.”); see also *Everson v. Board of Ed. of Ewing*, 330 U. S. 1, 16 (1947) (a State “cannot exclude” individuals “because of their faith, or lack of it, from receiving the benefits of public welfare legislation”). (emphasis added)

The opinion goes on to cite two of the most recent decisions of the high court:

*Trinity Lutheran* [2017], wherein the Court declared such religious discrimination to be “odious to our Constitution” and *Espinoza* [2020], wherein the Court determined: “A State need not subsidize private education, [b]ut once a State decides to do so, it cannot disqualify some private schools solely because they are religious.” Roberts connects the dots: “By ‘condition[ing] the availability of benefits’ in that manner, Maine’s tuition assistance program—like the program in *Trinity Lutheran*—‘effectively penalizes the free exercise’ of religion.”

Roberts also takes direct aim at the dissenting opinion:

Justice Breyer stresses the importance of “government neutrality” when it comes to religious matters, but there is nothing neutral about Maine’s program. The State pays tuition for certain students at private schools—so long as the schools are not religious. That is discrimination against religion. A State’s anti-establishment interest does not justify enactments that exclude some members of the community from an otherwise generally available public benefit because of their religious exercise.

Beyond that, Roberts writes: “The benefit is tuition at a public or private school, selected by the parent, with no suggestion that the ‘private school’ must somehow provide a ‘public’ education.”

He goes on:

Maine has decided not to operate schools of its own, but instead to offer tuition assistance that parents may direct to the public or private schools of their choice. Maine’s administration of that benefit is subject to the free exercise principles governing any such public benefit program—including the prohibition on denying the benefit based on a recipient’s religious exercise.

Yet again: “As we held in *Espinoza*, a ‘State need not subsidize private education. But once a State decides to do so, it cannot disqualify some private schools solely because they are religious.’” The opinion underscores that it is not a disqualifying characteristic that faith-based schools “believe faith should ‘permeate[]’ everything they do.” This remark is critically important because, very frequently, opposition to aid programs has pivoted around whether or not our schools are “irremediably” pervasive, so that “religion” was not merely an isolated course. This decision makes it clear that we need not segregate our values to one class period a day. On the contrary: “[E]ducating young people in their faith, inculcating its teachings, and training them to live their faith are responsibilities that lie at the very core of the mission of a private religious school.” As a matter of fact, lest we move in the direction of governmental interference in the internal workings of a faith-based school, we read: “Any attempt to give effect to such a distinction by scrutinizing whether and how a religious school pursues its educational mission would also raise serious concerns about state entanglement with religion and denominational favoritism.”

The majority opinion ends thus:

Maine’s “nonsectarian” requirement for its otherwise generally available tuition assistance payments violates the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. Regardless of how the benefit and restriction are described, the program operates to identify and exclude otherwise eligible schools on the basis of their religious exercise. The judgment of the Court of Appeals is reversed, and the case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.

### **The Minority Opinion**

Justices Breyer, Kagan, and Sotomayor dissented from the majority opinion, with Breyer writing the minority opinion (and Sotomayor adding a codicil of her own).

At the outset, the minority accuses the majority: “The Court today pays almost no attention to the words in the first Clause while giving almost exclusive attention to the words in the second.”

What they are referring to is the so-called “non-establishment” clause of the First Amendment, namely, that Congress cannot create a state or national religion – the historical, clear and proper interpretation of the words of the text. For decades, secularists have attempted to twist those words essentially into a banner for governmental hostility to religion and religious influence. The minority justices fail to accept the plain truth that the “non-establishment” clause exists,

precisely to safeguard the second clause, namely, freedom of religion (not freedom from religion), and thus rightly called “the first freedom.” The same justices also seemingly forget that, in *Torcaso v. Watkins* (1961), the secular humanism they are touting was declared to be a religion, entitled to First Amendment protection. However, if it is protected by the First Amendment, it must also live under its strictures.

It is no accident that the minority opinion relies almost exclusively on cases which evinced hostility toward religious freedom, with them all emerging from the same era of jurisprudence: *Engle* (1962), *Abington* (1963), *Walz* (1970), *Nyquist* (1973). It is likewise significant that this opinion has recourse to the word “risk” seven times, so as to raise the specter of possible religious warfare, should any favor be shown to religious bodies (not to any one in particular – which would fall afoul of the “non-establishment” clause) – but for all, equally.

In the most absurd section of this opinion, the justices assert that “distinctions are important,” with which no one could disagree. However, they proceed to argue that no one can discriminate against a religious body’s “status” but could have serious questions about its “use.” In other words, a religious institution is free to exist, but not free to practice what it believes!1

They also muddle the Maine law, even while accurately quoting it, that is, that the sponsored form of education must occur “at the public school or the approved private school of the parent’s choice.” The private schools involved in the case were “approved” by the State accrediting body. The justices, however, add an element to their calculus, which they find offensive, but not found in the legislation: The schools in question “also teach students to accept particular religious beliefs and to engage in particular religious practices” – as though that eviscerates their ability to fulfill the legitimate interests of the State (which has never been alleged). In other words, those schools do everything required by law – and more, not less! However, the justices deem the following findings to be offensive: “. . . in science class, students learn that atmospheric layers ‘are evidence of God’s good design.’”

And: “‘ help[ing] every student develop a truly Christian world view by integrating studies with the truths of Scripture. . . In mathematics classes, for example, students learn that ‘a creator designed the universe such that one plus one is always going to be two.’” Of course, what the justices find so horrifying could be said about any authentically Catholic school as well.

Seemingly, they do not consider the “world view” of the government schools to be problematic – although they certainly promote the religion of secular humanism, which conclusion the justices refuse to acknowledge, rather declaring that “public” schools “are religiously neutral.”

The minority opinion continues on its way of pitting faith-based schools against the supposedly “neutral” government schools by suggesting that what goes on in the religious schools “would cause a significant number of Maine citizens discomfort or displeasure.” How about the “discomfort or displeasure” experienced by thousands upon thousands of parents hostage to the government schools, who are revolted by the outrageous programs of sex education or critical race theory to which their children are subjected?

The fundamental problem is that these justices have identified valid educational objectives with the policies of the government schools. I have always found an analogy useful in such discussions. When the State determines that a person is in need of food stamps, that person is given a voucher which can be “cashed in” at any grocery store at all. The State does not say the client must frequent Shop Rite, rather than Whole Foods; nor does the government have any say in the running of grocery stores. The legitimate state interest is that the person be fed, leaving the choice of venue to the person in need. Similarly, the legitimate state interest in education is that a child emerge a literate, informed person. How that is accomplished is best determined by the child’s parents, who are – and always remain – the primary educators of their children.

Ironically, Breyer ends his opinion, quoting himself in *Zelman*, with the following observation: “At bottom, there is almost no area ‘as central to religious belief as the shaping, through primary education, of the next generation’s minds and spirits.’”

How true!

Then follows the dissenting, concurring opinion of Justice Sotomayor. She leads off with reference to “the wall of separation between church and state that the Framers fought to build.” To the credit of Breyer, he never attempts to ground his opinion in that discredited image; in point of fact, that expression does not appear in any “founding” document, but in a private communication of Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association, prevailing on the President to declare a national day of fasting. To be sure, that metaphor has taken on a life of its own, but one entirely uncalled for in terms of true jurisprudence.

Sotomayor notes that the current case takes its place in light of recent cases dealing with this topic – all favorable to the advancement of religious freedom. Rather blithely, she speaks of parental freedom of choice to decide on the most appropriate educational environment for their children, however, failing to acknowledge that that right can only be exercised by those who have the ability to pay for the exercise of that right, oblivious to the insight of constitutional scholar, Jesuit Father Virgil Blum, that “a civil right penalized is a civil right suppressed” (the very logic behind the invalidity of the “poll tax” in the South, levied, precisely, to suppress the voting franchise of poor blacks).

Sotomayor goes on to pillory the Court’s “evolutioniz[ing]” of its interpretation of the Free Exercise clause. In reality, the more recent decisions are no more or less than a “return to the sources,” where we learn that – at the Founding – all schools were denominational schools, and all were publicly funded. Like Breyer, she resorts to fear-mongering, with reliance on the very hostile cases already noted: “It [the majority opinion] reaches that conclusion by embracing arguments from prior separate writings and ignoring decades of precedent affording governments flexibility in navigating the tension between the Religion Clauses.”

On the contrary, the more recent decisions, relying on the *Everson* case of 1947, ground their reasoning in the so-called “child-benefit” theory; interestingly, *Everson* came to the right conclusion, while using the wrong jurisprudence. Pursuing the same illogical trajectory, she asserts: “As this Court has long recognized, the Establishment Clause requires that public

education be secular and neutral as to religion.” As I have already pointed out, such a view is totally ahistorical.

She ends her very poorly argued opinion with the throw-away line: “What a difference five years makes.” We could say the same in regard to decisions like *Obergefell*.

### **A Bit Of Historical Perspective**

The Catholic drive for educational parity and equity began under the indomitable Archbishop John Hughes of New York (nicknamed “Dagger John” by his foes), who reigned gloriously from 1842 to his death in 1864. Hughes maintained that Catholics were subjected to “double taxation,” paying for a school system that was irredeemably Protestant (thus jeopardizing the souls of Catholic children) and then paying for their own schools. He brought his fight to the Common School Board of the City, fought bravely and well, but lost, with the result that for nearly two centuries, Catholics have borne the burden of “double taxation.”

In 1875, following on a suggestion of President Ulysses Grant, Representative James Blaine (of Maine, ironically enough!) proposed an amendment to the Constitution banning any form of government funding of denominational schools. Although the effort failed at the federal level, over the course of time, nearly forty states adopted some version of that proposal. Its motivation was undeniably rooted in the anti-Catholicism spawned by the Know-Nothings and KKK.

Hence, opposition to parental freedom of choice in education has deep roots in anti-Catholicism. The first Supreme Court decision broaching this topic was *Pierce v. The Society of Sisters* (1925). The State of Oregon attempted to shut down the State’s Catholic schools. The Sisters of Providence fought against the injustice, having the case land in the lap of the Supreme Court, which slapped down Oregon’s effort to create a monopoly in the field of education with the searing line: “The child is not the mere creature of the State; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations.” Interestingly, that line found its way into the education encyclical of Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929) – the only U. S. Court decision ever cited in a papal document!

The first case of the modern era directly dealing with faith-based schools – actually, specifically Catholic schools, was the *Everson* case of 1947, which concerned a municipality’s desire to fund the busing of Catholic school students in a Trenton (New Jersey) suburb. As alluded to earlier, the Court allowed the busing program to continue because of the benefit to children, irrespective of the type of school they attended. That said, the justices enshrined a version of Church-State relations which was quite defective, from an historical point of view.

From 1968 forward, a host of cases found their way to the Supreme Court, resulting in tortured reasoning; for example, the Court determined that a state could provide text books (those used in government school districts) to parochial schools, but not maps (because a Catholic school teacher, ridiculously, might use a map to show the location of Rome and teach the children that Rome is where the Pope lives!). That absurdity led Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan to ask if it

could pass constitutional muster if a state provided parochial school pupils with an atlas – which is a book of maps!

Beginning in 1993, with the *Zobrest* decision, the Supreme Court launched onto a course correction, with numerous cases landing in the pro-school choice field and with the 2020 *Espinoza* case decidedly leading the way into a much more historically rooted and positive approach to the issue.

Where do we go from here?

The present case sounds the death-knell for Blaine amendments; no state legislator can declare that programs of aid for children in faith-based schools are unconstitutional, at either the state or federal level. In other words, the fig leaf has been removed.

It is providential that the two schools in the present case were not Catholic schools. Why do I say that? Because the embarrassing, historical anti-Catholicism could not be used to cloud the issue. That said, as in the pro-life cause, the Catholic Church has been in the forefront of parental freedom of choice in education, from Pope Pius XI to Vatican II, to John Paul II and the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church.

Schemes to evade the clear ruling of the Court are already on the planning board.<sup>2</sup> So, now it is incumbent on proponents of parental rights to form viable and intelligent coalitions; indeed, this intensely popular grass-roots movement can advance through very healthy ecumenical and interfaith cooperation, and with completely secular allies. That said, we must be extremely vigilant regarding the kinds of aid programs that we support.

Under no circumstances should we countenance direct financial aid to our schools; on the contrary, any aid program ought to be directed to parents for two reasons: first, that underscores that parents are the primary educators of their children and thus the ones given the means to have unfettered freedom to direct the education of their children; second, direct aid to our schools would subject us to total governmental control; the Canadian situation should give us ample reason to pause: Forewarned is forearmed.

At the same time, we must be prepared for massive opposition from the public school teacher unions, with their accompanying programs of disinformation. As we have learned over the past few years, the teacher unions are not concerned with the welfare of children but with their own self-preservation. Carson breaks the back of the education monopoly, replacing it with educational parity or equity, that will bring about healthy competition, benefitting all. By a happy coincidence, the very same week that this Supreme Court decision was handed down, the State of Arizona passed a school voucher program, awarding parents up to \$7000 per child to be used at any school of the parents' choice; the amount is significant for Catholics because the average cost of elementary school tuition in the country hovers around \$5000 (high schools around \$10,000).

For the moment, the Carson decision gives us great cause for rejoicing, and I suspect that “Dagger John” is smiling down on this happy turn of events.

Rev. Peter M. Stravinskias

Endnotes:

1Reacting to this suggestion, Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, chairman of the USCCB Committee for Religious Liberty, and Bishop Thomas A. Daly of Spokane, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Catholic Education, said the high court "rightly ruled that the Constitution protects not just the right to be religious but also to act religious. . . . This commonsense result reflects the essence of Catholic education."

They went on to say:

"The court has again affirmed that states cannot exclude religious schools from generally available public benefits based on their religious affiliation or exercise. . . . In our pluralistic society, it is vital that all people of faith be able to participate in publicly available programs and so to contribute to the common good."

2Aaron Tang, writing in the New York Times on June 24, thinks the Maine Legislature has already out-maneuvered the Court:

The legislative fix crafted by Maine lawmakers offers a model for lawmakers elsewhere who are alarmed by the court's aggressive swing to the right. Maine's example shows that those on the losing end of a case can often outmaneuver the court and avoid the consequences of a ruling. By enacting its law, Maine was able to assure its taxpayers that they will not be complicit in discriminating against L.G.B.T.Q. students, because private schools that discriminate will be ineligible for public funds.

The Court, however, has said in absolute terms in this decision that no such requirements can be levied against faith-based schools, so sleight-of-hand tricks will not work.

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<https://www.corpuschristisc.org/teens-baptism.html>

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## School Closed In India For Celebrating Christmas

A Christian school was ordered closed in India on Dec. 26 based on a charge of “trying to convert students and their parents” by celebrating Christmas, although the order was later rescinded.

The incident involved St. Paul Higher Primary School in Ilkal in the Bagalkot district of Karnataka state, located in southern India.

Education Department officials closed the school following a complaint by some right-wing organizations and an inspection by an official.

In his order, the official had said that the school was being closed indefinitely for “celebrating Christmas in violation of rules,” but didn’t specify what rule was being violated.

“You have served meat in classrooms during Christmas celebrations on December 25. This has led to embarrassment to the public and the department. You have to keep the school closed till further orders. Legal action will be taken if you reopen the school without permission,” the order said.

However, the department withdrew the order after news of the closure of the school became public through the media on December 31. The school effectively remained closed for four days, as the order was issued on December 26, which was a Sunday.

The investigation came after Pradeep Amarannanavar, a convener of a group of Hindu nationalist organizations issued a complaint that the school was trying convert students and parents.

“The school management invited students and parents to school on Christmas Day, and offered them lunch with meat, wine and ‘Satya Veda’, a Kannada translation of the Bible. This is nothing but an attempt to convert Hindus into Christianity by allurements and force,” he said. Hindus do not eat beef, and many devout Hindus avoid all meat and alcohol.

Jackson D. Marck, a member of the school management committee, denied the accusations.

“We are not converting anyone. First of all, the school is not run by Christian missionaries. It is run by some residents of Ilkal. The school committee includes members of all faiths. The school has students of all religions. The lunch [mentioned in the complaint] was not held in the school. The school is run in a rented premises,” he said.

Sajan K. George, the president of the Bangalore-based Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC), said the incident is an “abuse and misuse” of Karnataka’s State Anti-Conversion Bill which was passed by the state assembly on Dec. 23. The bill is still awaiting passage by the legislative council to become law, but officials have started trying to enforce its provisions.

“The right-wing groups repeatedly target Christian institutions on baseless and fabricated conversion allegations, and even though St Paul’s School is not run by a church or a Christian missionary – it is run by private individuals – the name is sufficient to trigger hatred of the right-wing groups against the school with a Christian name,” he told *Crux*.

Karnataka is ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is Hindu nationalist, and also rules the national government.

The anti-conversion law proposes a maximum punishment of a jail term of 10

Nirmala Carvalho

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-asia/2022/01/school-closed-in-india-for-celebrating-christmas>

years for “forcible religious conversion” of women, minors and people from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, communities that have been marginalized for centuries in India.

## A Year-End Victory For Catholic Education

This strong federal ruling for religious freedom is a wonderful gift to Catholic educators and the entire Church.

Last summer, I [wrote](#) about the urgency of holding a “crucial line of defense for Catholic education” against false ideology and attacks on Christian morality — and now, a key victory has been won in federal court!

On Dec. 13, a three-judge panel of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals [ruled](#) unanimously that Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, is protected by the First Amendment in its right to uphold religious and moral standards for its members. It agreed with attorneys from the stalwart [Becket](#) institute and rejected an appeal by two former students who were dismissed from the seminary for violating agreed-upon standards by entering into civil same-sex marriages.

While the dismissal of two students at a nondenominational seminary may not seem immediately relevant to Catholic schools and colleges, in fact this case threatened to dismantle a crucial protection for religious education. The lawsuit challenged the religious exemption to Title IX, the federal law that bans sex discrimination in education, and the exemption’s availability to schools and colleges that are not directly controlled by a religious sect — as many private Catholic schools and nearly all Catholic colleges are not.

Why should this be important to Catholic educators? Surely they have no issues with preventing sex discrimination? Catholic schools and colleges have eagerly employed women, expanded opportunities for

women’s sports and worked to combat sexual harassment and assault.

In fact, victory in this case now empowers Catholic educators to stand firmly in the defense of women and against the irrational demands of gender ideology, which would erode many of the gains made for women under Title IX.

The whole federal effort to prevent sex discrimination was upended in 2020 with the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, which distorts the meaning of “sex discrimination” for purposes of employment law to include homosexuality and self-identified gender, even when it is contrary to one’s biological sex. Although *Bostock* applies only to employment law under Title VII, activists and the Biden administration are attempting to conform Title IX to the demands of LGBT ideology.

This only hurts women, by giving biologically male students access to women’s sports competitions and bathrooms. It creates other serious problems for Catholic education by allowing teachers and students to ignore moral standards regarding same-sex marriage and homosexual behavior.

Nevertheless, as long as the robust religious exemption in Title IX stands, religious schools and colleges can uphold their beliefs and protect traditional separations between male and female facilities and athletics. The exemption stands in the way of radical attacks on religious education. That’s why, over the past year, we have seen [multiple](#) legislative and legal efforts by activists and the Biden administration to

weaken or dismantle the Title IX religious exemption.

### ***Serious threat averted***

One of those now-failed efforts was *Maxon v. Fuller Theological Seminary*. The plaintiffs seized upon language in the Title IX religious exemption that says an eligible school or college must be “controlled by a religious organization.” Although the U.S. Department of Education has always exempted from Title IX clearly religious institutions that are nondenominational (like Fuller) or legally independent of a religious body (like nearly all Catholic colleges and many Catholic schools), the plaintiffs tried to have these institutions stripped of their religious freedom and forced to comply with the Biden administration’s strange interpretation of sex discrimination.

This would have been devastating for Catholic education. Last June, the Cardinal Newman Society and several faithful Catholic schools and colleges [joined](#) with the Christian Legal Society and other religious groups in an [amicus brief](#) urging the Ninth Circuit to reject the students’ appeal. Signers included Belmont Abbey College (North Carolina), Benedictine College (Kansas), Franciscan University of Steubenville (Ohio), Lumen Christi High School (Indiana), Marian High School (Indiana), the Regina Academies (Pennsylvania) and Thomas More College of Liberal Arts (New Hampshire).

Other signers representing a variety of beliefs included the American Association of Christian Schools, Association for Biblical Higher Education, Association of Christian Schools International, General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, Jewish Coalition for Religious Liberty, and Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

“It is dangerous and un-American to deny a share in religious freedom for nondenominational and independent religious institutions,” was my statement to media reporters last summer. “Such a policy would unconstitutionally discriminate against many of America’s religious schools and colleges, including those Catholic schools and colleges that are faithful to their beliefs but legally independent of the Catholic Church.”

The amicus brief called on the Ninth Circuit to recognize that an independent institution controlled by a board of trustees with deeply held religious convictions and a religious mission is sufficiently “controlled by a religious organization” for the purposes of the Title IX exemption.

Praise be to God, the court unanimously agreed. “For over 30 years, DOE [U.S. Department of Education] has maintained that the statute does not contain ‘an independent requirement that the controlling religious organization be a separate legal entity than the educational institution,’” the court noted. It upheld a district court’s ruling in 2020 and found that the plaintiffs “could allege no additional facts to save their challenge to Fuller’s differential treatment of same-sex marriages as compared to opposite-sex marriages, since Fuller’s actions fell squarely within Title IX’s religious exemption.”

Catholic educators and the whole of the Catholic Church received a wonderful gift, by this strong federal ruling for religious freedom. We live in a nation that still celebrates Christmas and allows Catholics to teach young people the truth of Christ — and for that we can be grateful in this merry season.

Patrick Reilly

<https://www.ncregister.com/blog/a-year-end-victory-for-catholic-education>

## **Pro-Life Student Sues School After Teachers Called Her “Bigot” For Starting a Pro-Life Club**

Several Indiana public school teachers are accused of posting defamatory statements about a student online after she tried to start a pro-life club in the Noblesville School District, according to a lawsuit filed this week in federal court.

Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life of America, which is helping the student, slammed school authorities for discriminating against the student because of her pro-life views.

“The degree to which adults in authority attempted to intimidate a high school freshman is astonishing,” Hawkins said.

Charitable Allies, Inc., of Indianapolis, [filed the lawsuit this week](#) on behalf of the student, a minor referred to as E.D., in the U.S. District Court Southern District of Indiana. It names the Noblesville School District, the high school and several school leaders and teachers.

According to the lawsuit, E.D. has been working since July to start a pro-life club at the high school, but school leaders repeatedly blocked her effort with “unwritten, unexplained criteria for participation in the life of the school.”

The lawsuit argues that school leaders have “unbridled discretion (that) allows them to create a culture that permits discrimination based on content and viewpoint.”

Teachers also posted defamatory statements on social media about the student, using her name and calling her pro-life views “bigoted” and “misogynistic,” according to the lawsuit.

A freshman, E.D. said she had no idea that her plans to help mothers and babies would face such hostility.

“I wanted to start this club to inspire like-minded students to advocate for our most vulnerable and point students to resources designed to uplift them in their time of need,” she said in a statement. “I knew some people would disagree with me, but I never expected to be attacked online—especially by my teachers.”

According to Students for Life, the school refused to approve her pro-life club, but it has approved other student clubs that promote specific points of view, including Young Democrats, Conservation club, Black Students Union, and Gender and Sexual Alliance.

Zac Kester, CEO and managing attorney of Charitable Allies, said public school districts cannot reject a student club just because school leaders disagree with its views.

“Public schools should be eager to support an inclusive environment that showcases a variety of viewpoints,” Kester said. “Students shouldn’t have to be afraid of teachers and administrators bullying them for their beliefs.”

Unfortunately, viewpoint discrimination has become increasingly common across the U.S., Hawkins said. She pointed to a long list of recent incidents targeting pro-life students, including vandalism, threats, a pattern of unexplained administrative delays, schools refusing to provide the same accommodations and opportunities to pro-life clubs that they do for other clubs, trigger warning mandates and more.

“Noblesville High School officials went all out to ensure that a minor girl could not speak in their presence about her love for mothers and their children, born and preborn, and that she would keep quiet at

school,” Hawkins said. “Parents in Noblesville must surely be concerned about school officials using media to attack a pro-life girl.”

Micaiah Bilger

<https://www.lifenews.com/2021/12/27/pro-life-student-schools-school-after-teachers-called-her-bigot-for-starting-a-pro-life-club>

## St. Dominic Savio: A Path To Hidden Holiness

In his book *Holiness is for all Seasons*, Pope Benedict XVI notes that conflicts between saints, such as Saints Peter and Paul, should comfort us, because they show that the saints were not dropped from Heaven. They are human just like you and me. We are all called by God Himself to be great saints – just as they were. May 6th is the feast day of a boy who answered that call.

St. Dominic Savio was born in Piedmont, Italy on April 2, 1842. He had a typical childhood with his parents and many siblings in a small town several miles from Turin, attending the local parochial school until he was old enough to join the Oratory of St. John Bosco. There he became a great example of charity to his friends. Nearing the age of 15, he left the Oratory to return home because he was sick and convinced of his impending death. Several days later, surrounded by family, he died in an odor of sanctity.

According to his father, however, shortly after he passed, Dominic bolted upright on his bed and began marveling full voice at the wonders he saw in Heaven. Then, just as suddenly, he fell back down, dead. This eschatological miracle of the young saint is a consoling reminder that the reward that awaits those who persevere to the end is real. The eternal truths are true indeed. From an early age, Dominic was eager to do God's will. Soon after arriving at the Oratory, he heard a visiting priest give a sermon about achieving holiness. Three points impressed him: first, that it is God's will for everyone to become a saint; second, that it is easy to do so; and third, that there are great rewards in Heaven for those who become saints.

Consumed with zeal for God, he began fasting on bread and water, and imposing

harsh mortifications on himself: wearing a hair shirt, sleeping with fewer sheets, and upon stones. However, when his teachers realized what Dominic was doing, they forbade him from undertaking this fasting regimen and these penances on the grounds that doing so was damaging his health and banned him from assuming any further penances without permission. St. John Bosco told Dominic that he could become the great saint he was striving to be by being completely obedient to his superiors in all things but sin. He said: "The penance God wishes from you is simply obedience. If you obey, that will suffice for everything."

Dominic was not satisfied. He considered obedience a necessity, and, therefore, insufficient as a penance. But St. John Bosco explained that whatever Dominic had to suffer, if offered to God, would become meritorious in His sight. With obedience, Dominic could give more glory to the Lord than by many long and arduous penances, for God delights in "obedience [more] than sacrifice"(1 Sam 15:22). It was in this manner of obedience, then, that Dominic surrendered to God, trusting that he would become a saint by obeying his superiors. He subsequently abided by the maxim: "I cannot do big things, but I can do little things with great love."

In St. Dominic's day, a child ordinarily received first communion at age 12. However, Dominic was given a dispensation to receive our Lord at age 7 because of his understanding of and love for Him. On that day, which he called the "happiest and most wonderful day of [his] life," he made four resolutions, which guided him from then on. They were to go to Confession and Holy Communion as often as his confessor allowed him; to sanctify Sundays and holy

days in a special manner; to have Jesus and Mary be his chief friends; and to choose death before sin. Dominic's resolutions, simple in their goals, can, with God's grace, also become our own.

St. Dominic is also a sublime example of hidden holiness. His quiet, unassuming example of sanctity lays out an imitable path to sanctity. He gave himself entirely to the service of his brothers and lived an ordinary student's life in an extraordinary way. Attending Holy Mass and receiving Holy Communion with utmost love and reverence as often as he could, going frequently to Confession, performing hidden mortifications every day, and silently suffering with God are the actions that made Dominic Savio a saint. These are the things that will make us great saints too if we persevere to death in doing them well.

Dominic would prepare and give thanks before and after every Holy Mass. He maintained a healthy contrition by not becoming scrupulous, but by obeying his confessor, who allowed him to confess no more frequently than once per week. In fact, in his book, *The Life of St. Dominic Savio*, St. John Bosco states that Dominic is "chiefly worthy of imitation in frequenting the Sacrament of Confession." It is this sacrament, St. John says, that guided Dominic through life and consoled him at

Edward Kerwin

<https://catholicexchange.com/st-dominic-savio-a-path-to-hidden-holiness/>

his death. He never failed to repent, trusting in God's Mercy, no matter how many times he had fallen, no matter the number or scale of his sufferings.

Perhaps St. Dominic Savio did not endure the same degree of suffering as did other great saints. But he is great nevertheless because he was faithful in doing God's will. That, in the end, is what makes great saints: doing the will of God. St. Paul says that "prophecies...will pass away[,] tongues...will cease[,] knowledge...will pass..., [but that] love never ends" (1 Cor. 13:8). Therefore, it is love that will make us saints, and it follows that to love God is to do His will. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15).

All great saints imitate Christ to a heroic degree. They endure their trials bravely. They are steadfast in faith to the end. Life is a continual battle with the forces of darkness, and it will not get any easier with age. But with the prayers and example of St. Dominic Savio, we have another faithful protector to guide us to God. We would do well to act on his words: "Ask Jesus to make you a saint. After all, only he can do that. Go to confession regularly and to Communion as often as you can."

St. Dominic Savio, pray for us, now and at the hour of our death.

## When Baseball Star Troy Stokes Jr. Hit a Priest's Car

The ex-Pittsburgh Pirates outfielder had a little mishap that led to a very happy cleric. Fr. Jeffrey Dauses was driving around busily running some errands when he thought something had come crashing down from the heavens:

“It felt like a meteorite had fallen on my car. It scared me to death and I almost went into the other lane,” the [pastor at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Baynesville, Maryland, shared with the Arlington Catholic Herald](#).

Thankfully, it was not quite so dramatic. It happened to be a baseball that had come from the stadium at the nearby Calvert Hall College High School. It made an almighty noise as it hit the side-view mirror, with pieces flying up on to the windshield of the priest's car. So understandably Fr. Dauses was pretty startled.

It was not one of the students who had hit the ball out of the park, but an alum: [Troy Stokes Jr.](#) had stopped by his former high school to lend a bit of batting support to the students.

The major league baseball player graduated from the high school in 2014, but is keen to share his experience and skills with the students at the school. So when the incident happened, he explained how an innocent baseball happened to land straight on the priest's car: “It was the last ball I hit — and I hit it pretty good. I hit it just right to left field, over the net.”

Stokes, who is now a free agent, reckoned that the ball had traveled 400 feet, not too far off his record hit of 480 feet when he was playing in the minor leagues.

As for Fr. Dauses — well, though slightly shaken — he was able to do a little detective work. He got out of his car and saw the ball rolling next to the car. He contacted Calvert Hall, which arranged for Stokes to sign the ball that now stands proudly in a mug on the pastor's desk.

However, what is really delightful is the message that the baseball pro wrote on the ball: “Sorry for hitting your mirror!!” And in a separate turn of events, on the day that the incident happened there was another connection between the children in Fr. Dauses' parish and the college:

“My car got hit on the day that Calvert Hall was sending out the acceptance letters to all those eighth graders. On the very day they're getting their letters, I get a baseball that smashes into my mirror. It was just kind of funny.”

In fact, half the boys in the parish were accepted at Calvert Hall, so maybe one day they'll get to train with Stokes.

In terms of his own baseball skills, Fr. Dauses believes his make him “pretty much the worst player ever,” having played in the Shrine of the Little Flower's junior athletic association's baseball league. He joked: “I played in the outfield so far out that not even Troy Stokes could possibly have hit a ball to me.”

Thankfully the damage to the car was minimal, but it's lovely to see how by sharing his sports prowess with the students at his former school, Stokes was able to set a great example to the kids with his [apology](#), and provide a little happiness (as well as a

near heart attack!) to a priest as he went about his errands.

Cerith Gardiner

<https://aleteia.org/2022/05/12/when-baseball-star-troy-stokes-jr-hit-a-priests-car>

## Guerilla Evangelization

The future of the Church in America hinges on the success of the New Evangelization, Pope St. John Paul's call to preach the Gospel anew in lands that have forgotten or forsaken it. Many wonderful initiatives in the Church over recent decades – The Catholic Thing among them – have been established to meet the saintly pontiff's challenge. But with the number of "Nones," Americans who do not subscribe to traditional religions, growing yearly – their ranks chock-full of fallen-away Catholics – the task of the New Evangelization is as pressing today as it ever has been.

In my work with high school students and with families in my parish, I am finding that a colossal obstacle to the New Evangelization's success is that so many lack a general cultural, intellectual, and religious framework in which they can receive the Gospel and comprehend its import. The problem is not that today's Americans are unintelligent. The problem is they have been schooled to be skeptical of truth and of religion, so much so that very many are prejudiced against any affirmation of their validity.

Today's children, like their parents before them, have learned that there is no truth beyond what science and mathematics can measure. Instead, what we perceive as real and as true is entirely subjective: we choose the meaning of life, we judge what is right and wrong. In this framework – if what I do is always right, and if this life is all there is – it is extremely difficult to preach a divine Savior. Likewise, for a person who denies the very possibility of truth, the universal truth claims of Christian doctrine sound very strange indeed.

Obstacles to evangelization exist within the Church as well. The poor catechesis that many of us have complained about for decades is yielding its rotten fruit. Today's schoolchildren are supposed to learn the faith from their Generation X (born 1965-1980) and Millennial (born 1981-1996) parents. But those parents themselves were malformed in the essentials of the Catholic faith and know little of what they are supposed to be passing on. Through no fault of their own, too many of today's parents and teachers "are blind guides. And if a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit." (Matt 15:14)

It's no wonder, then, why children and marrying couples are not showing up for Mass and the other sacraments – they know not what they do. Religious ignorance does not only plague those who have dropped out of the Church. Tragically, even some of the most well-meaning parents attending Mass each week cannot explain to their children why it is they attend. The baseline Christian narrative – that we are sinners who need a Savior, and that we must respond willingly to Christ's offer of redemptive love – is as well-known today as the finer points of Morse code.

In this situation, many of our New Evangelization efforts will not have the impact that they deserve and that we desire. They have to continue, for sure, but we must realize that too many great Catholic ventures will sound like a foreign language to our intended audience.

Hence the New Evangelization needs something more – call it Guerilla Evangelization. This name is not meant to conjure up any specific guerilla groups from history. It's offered as an image for the

Church Militant for two purposes. First, it underscores how formidable the secular influence has become, which creates major difficulties for evangelization done through parish programs and traditional media. Second, it conveys the boldness and ingenuity and sheer daring that successful evangelization requires today.

Guerilla Evangelization would be the work of enterprising Catholics who identify specific individuals, persons who, though unwittingly incorporated into the rival secular army, seem ripe to hear the Christian message. These evangelizers then labor to free those individuals from the secular ranks and bring them into the Church by preaching the preambles of faith – acknowledgments that nature is normative; that there is truth, beauty, and goodness in the world; and that these three transcendentals are not subjective labels, but realities that come from an external, divine source.

Guerilla Evangelization, then, requires a tremendous investment of time and energy by evangelizers on behalf of these individuals whose basic worldviews are not only distant from but often actually opposed to Christianity.

Guerilla evangelizers personally lead these individuals through all the questions and difficulties that inevitably arise for people living within our current cultural milieu.

David G. Bonagura, Jr.

<https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2022/05/15/guerilla-evangelization>

They recommend books, websites, and sit for conversations that not only answer questions that originate from the prevailing worldview, but also present the preambles of faith so that Christ's preaching can resonate more profoundly.

For inspiration, Guerilla evangelizers can look East and West at two of the most enterprising missionaries in Church history: Matteo Ricci and Isaac Jogues. Both priests spent years studying the languages and customs of, respectively, the Chinese and Native Americas, so they could present compellingly the Christian message in a manner tailored for their audiences. Measured by the numbers they baptized, neither had much of an impact; they made converts by the tens, not the hundreds. But both inspired their converts to break from their peoples' sinful ways (Ricci, for example, would not baptize any Chinese man who refused to give up his concubine) and to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the savior of all.

With what we once called Western Civilization fractured and with Catholic culture forgotten, the Church in America has to create new means to reach today's unchurched parents and children. It's time for Guerilla Evangelization, a slow, painstaking, but relentless preaching not only of the Gospel, but of everything needed to understand the Gospel in its fullness.

## **When a Teacher Calls Christianity a Fairy Tale, It's Time To Consider Catholic School**

There's a double standard in schools that all of us should address.

Growing up and attending public school, I remember being in a European history course and being told that the Middle Ages were a time of darkness. Finally, with the Renaissance, and more importantly, the Reformation, it was said that "Reason" (written many times on the board with a capital letter) prevailed.

Of course, something seemed a bit off about this historical narrative. I was aware of the medieval university system which featured giants like Saint Albert and Saint Thomas Aquinas. I was also aware that Luther's 95 Theses were not so much about "reason" but about a theological dispute over scriptural interpretation.

When trying to question the narrative that was being fed to us as simple truth, it became clear to me that the teacher was not interested in a different version of interpretation. At the time, I chalked the incident up to his own ignorance of certain historical facts – perhaps based upon an overly simplistic and biased interpretation of events that was sadly fed to him – and not an intentional misrepresentation.

That was two decades ago. Now, as a priest who works as vocation director, I am asked to speak at a lot of parishes to youth groups. Recently, I was invited to speak at a parish as part of a three-part series to the youth group in a sort of "ask Father anything" format, including topics like why God permits evil, what evidence exists for whether Jesus rose from the dead, and other topics.

At one of these nights, several of the high school students in attendance mentioned that their public high school teacher regularly makes arguments for why the Resurrection is not an historical fact. I hear these and similar stories with some regularity these days.

History, because it contains both elements of fact and also interpretive analysis, is a subject that can end up being taught in several different ways.

Obviously, it goes without saying that there are many good and hard-working public school teachers. At the same time, it struck me as odd, reflecting both on my own experience, and also listening to these students, that there seems to be a certain double standard. There might exist teachers who would want to give a triumphalist reading of Church history to students, papering over human shortcomings of the Church down the ages. If a teacher tried to give such an overly simplistic reading of history, it would most likely not be tolerated, nor should it be. If that is true, then why would overly simplistic and sometimes emphatically anti-Christian analysis of otherwise very complex historical events seem to be an acceptable common theme in these settings?

### ***Historians' Duty***

History, because it contains both elements of fact and also interpretive analysis, is a subject that can end up being taught in several different ways.

Historians have to consider multiple, sometimes inconsistent sources. They have to choose how to weigh the evidence, and

consider whether certain events are connected or unrelated. They must make historical judgments. At the bare minimum, good scholarship should distinguish between those facts which are viewed as uncontested and those which are up to historical query.

It should also raise for discussion the multiple interpretive narratives which pertain to each historical subject area. Not every unreasonable opinion detached from the facts need be taught; but when there are various versions of the story that can be reasonably inferred from the historical data, those versions should be taught. My best history teachers did this.

The challenge becomes what to do with situations in which the atheist teacher tries to disprove to his students the historicity of the Resurrection of Christ. In this particular instance, the students told me that their teacher had argued that there was “no evidence” for the Resurrection. On the other hand, one must realize that it is an historical fact that a band of 11 apostles and numerous other followers of Jesus claimed that they saw Jesus executed by the Romans and then raised from the dead about 2,000 years ago. Some of them wrote it down in accounts that became the New Testament. Some of their accounts are essentially eyewitness testimony to events they experienced. Historians can decide what to do with their statements about their experiences and the sudden conversion of thousands of others based upon it. Christianity exists because believers have faith in that testimony which exists as an historical fact; and that faith has resulted in the conversion of much of the world.

The historical facts remain the same, which some people of faith find convincing, and others do not. That is the evidence, and to

claim that such evidence does not exist is inaccurate.

Just as a teacher claiming it “did” happen would be inserting their faith into the classroom – the Resurrection is the central claim of the Christian faith – so claiming “it did not happen” is an assertion of faith in the contrary.

Just as a teacher claiming it “did” happen would be inserting their faith into the classroom – the Resurrection is the central claim of the Christian faith – so claiming “it did not happen” is an assertion of faith in the contrary. It is to tell the students not to be Christian. The faithful view would not be tolerated in a public school, whereas the other one seems to be. Hence the double standard.

### *Asking Self-Restraint*

When I first noted this double-standard, various secular friends asked me, “What should a teacher do? Lie if asked their own opinion? Merely say, ‘I can’t talk about that?’” It would seem that once again, the teacher should acknowledge that down the centuries people have presented arguments both in favor and against faith in the Resurrection of Christ based upon the historical data. Whether that faith is well-placed – i.e., whether one should become a Christian – would be beyond the scope of the curriculum of that particular history course. The historical data, however, did happen; and that data is the testimony of those who experienced whatever it is they experienced which they identified as the Resurrection. And that did happen, so it should be presented without a bias towards or against religious faith. This would require a type of self-restraint in speech, but we expect similar self-restraint of teachers in other ways.

When I noted the double-standard in a recent Facebook post, one person replied it was not a double standard at all, as public schools cannot promote religion. The implication was that to promote anti-religion (which is itself a form of religion) is acceptable. I see this a lot, but this is problematic for the obvious reason that to deny the Resurrection requires in itself a kind of faith in one's interpretation of history. "Value-neutral" education is itself a type of value. To be clear, the students never gave any indication that the administration is aware of the situation, and maybe they would act to rectify the double standard.

The type of education I am advocating for in schools is perfectly allowed by legal

Father Donato Infante

<https://aleteia.org/2022/05/20/when-a-teacher-calls-christianity-a-fairy-tale-its-time-to-consider-catholic-school>

standards, but based on my own experience, and that of the teens with whom I spoke, I wonder how rare it is. The very fact that the responses to my initial Facebook post was that public schools should be allowed to be hostile to faith indicates that, despite current legal protections saying otherwise, the battle will be ongoing. Recent years have seen many public debates, between parents and technocratic educational experts regarding what public schools are being taught regarding sexuality or race. The problem of a secular worldview runs far deeper. The 19th century saw an enormous explosion in Catholic schooling to provide an environment to Catholics that was not hostile to the faith. Maybe it is time for a revival of Catholic education.

## **Audience With the Participants In the 46th General Chapter Of the Brothers Of the Christian Schools, 21.05.2022**

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the 46th General Chapter of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, to whom he addressed the following words:

Dear brothers, good morning and welcome!

I thank the Superior General for his words, also for “Lolo Kiko” [Filipino greeting: “Grandfather Francis”], and I wish him and his council well. I am happy to meet you on the occasion of your 46th General Chapter, on the theme: “Building new paths to transform lives”. It is good to understand the Chapter this way, on the move, as a building site of new path, leading to the brothers, especially the poorest. But we know that the “Way”, the truly new way, is Jesus Christ: by following him, by walking with him, our lives are transformed, and we in turn become leaven, salt, and light.

For you, following the charism of Saint John Baptist de la Salle, these “new paths” are first and foremost pathways of education, to be achieved in the schools, colleges and universities that you manage in around one hundred countries in which you are present. A great responsibility! With you, I thank the Lord, because educational work is a great gift first and foremost for those who carry it out: it is work that demands a lot, but gives a lot! The constant relationship with educators, with parents, and especially with children and young people is an ever-living source of humanity, even with all the hardships and problems it entails.

In this relationship, on this pathway you take with them, you offer the values of your rich pedagogical tradition: you educate in

responsibility, creativity, coexistence, justice, and peace: you educate in the inner life, in being open to the transcendent, in the sense of wonder and contemplation before the mystery of life and creation. You live all of this and you interpret it in Christ, and you translate it fully into humanity. I am reminded of the motto of Saint John Paul II in *Redemptor hominis*: “Man is the way for the Church”. You put this motto into practice in your educational mission. It is your way of realizing what Saint Paul wrote: “Christ is formed in you” (Gal 4:19). To educate in this way is your apostolate, your specific contribution to evangelization: to make humanity grow according to Christ. In this sense, your schools are “Christian”: not because of an external label, but because they take this path.

We are aware that the world is experiencing an educational emergency. The educational pact is broken, and now the state, educators and the family are separated. We must seek a new pact that is communication, working together. This educational emergency is made more acute by the consequences of the pandemic. The two great challenges of our time: the challenge of fraternity and the challenge of caring for the common home, cannot be answered except through education. Both are primarily educational challenges. And thank God, the Christian community is not only aware of this, but has been engaged in this work for some time now, trying to “build new paths to transform” the way of life. And you, brothers, are part of this construction site, indeed, you are in the front line, educating so as to move from a closed world to an open world; from a throwaway culture to a culture of care; from a culture of rejection to a culture of integration; from the pursuit of

vested interests to the pursuit of the common good. As educators, you know very well that this transformation must start from the conscience, or it will only be a façade. And you also know that you cannot do this work alone, but by cooperating in an “educational alliance” with families, with communities and ecclesial aggregations, with the educational realities present in the territory.

This, dear brothers, is your field of work. But to be good workers, you must not neglect yourselves! You cannot give to the young what you do not have within yourselves. The Christian educator, in the

His Holiness Francis

<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2022/05/21/220521c.html>

school of Christ, is first of all a witness, and he is a teacher to the extent that he is a witness. I have nothing to teach you in this, but only, as a brother, I want to remind you: witness. And above all I pray for you, that you may be brothers not only in name but in fact. And for your schools to be Christian not in name but in fact.

Thank you for what you are and what you do! Go forth with the joy of evangelizing by educating and of educating by evangelizing. I bless you and all your communities. And you, please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!

## This Book For NYC School Kids Has AOC Instead Of ABCs

*New York City school kids are learning their AOCs.*

A book intended for 10- and 11-year-olds — which glorifies socialist Alexandria Ocasio Cortez and her far-left “Squad,” knocks religion, and mocks Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell — is being distributed to public school libraries, parents told *The Post*.

The book, “What You Don’t Know: A Story of Liberated Childhood,” was written and illustrated by Brooklynite Anastasia Higginbotham and appears on a fifth-grade independent reading list labeled “Universal Mosaic.” The DOE’s new Mosaic curriculum is supposed to kick off next year.

The picture book centers on a black child who talks about fitting in at school and church and a friend “who’s queer like me.”

The boy, named Demetrius, is shown in a church where he says, “Churches can preach all they want about love — the only thing that I feel when I’m here is shame.”

The boy’s spirit meets Jesus — who is apparently a Democrat — and who tells him “everyone is invited to love and be loved.” The distressed looking boy points to an unnamed white man — a McConnell lookalike — and says, “Even — ?” Jesus replies “Yes.”

Higginbotham, in a [reading of the book](#) posted to YouTube, confirmed that the unnamed white man is, indeed, McConnell and they are at Catholic church.

“That’s Mitch McConnell. And the child wants to know if even Mitch McConnell is invited to love and be loved considering all the harm he is causing,” she said.

The narrative later goes on to preach that “We will rewrite the rules we live by and love the world into balance,” accompanied by an illustration of the boy watching television with his parents. Depicted on the TV screen, and named in the book, are “U.S. Representatives Rashida Tlaib, Ayanna Pressley, Ilhan Omar and Alexandria Ocasio Cortez.”

One Staten Island mom said she thought the book was anti-Catholic and that with its mix of religion and politics “has no place in the classroom.”

“It’s a horrible book,” the mom said.

The woman and another borough mom said the principal at their school, PS 3 in Pleasant Plains, refused to distribute it and that the school’s leadership team was going through other books to determine if they were appropriate.

The principal declined to comment.

Higginbotham wrote another controversial book called “Not My Idea,” about a child who “connects to the opportunity and their responsibility to dismantle white supremacy.”

Students can learn about the Mosaic books on the DOE portion of the website TeachingBooks and can download them for free on the Sora app, to which all kids get logins.

Among other questionable titles was a book called “The Bell Rang” for kindergartners that discusses slavery, and “I’m Not a Girl,”

about being transgender, which was on a first-grade reading list.

Another controversial book on the Mosaic list that has upset parents is [“Our Skin.”](#) which is geared toward those ages 2 to 5, and blames the idea of race and racism on white people. It is on the kindergarten reading list.

“While perhaps well intentioned, bringing political and ideological materials into the classroom can undermine trust between families and schools. Being inclusive starts with listening to diverse perspectives, and accepting the culture, values and deeply held beliefs of all families who are part of the school community,” said [Bion Bartning](#), who last year started the Manhattan-based Foundation Against Intolerance & Racism to fight the teaching of critical race theories in schools and promote a “pro-human agenda.”

Councilman Joseph Borelli, who represents Staten Island, called the controversial books a “poor parting gift from the prior administration.”

“Thankfully, most of my principals have used them as paperweights. There isn’t any value in trying to offend parents and confuse students,” he said.

Jennifer Hu, a member of the District 20 Community Education Council in southwest Brooklyn, said at a recent meeting that she wanted to be informed when students would be reading “hot topic” tomes.

Melissa Klein and Bernadette Hogan

<https://nypost.com/2022/05/21/this-controversial-book-talks-about-aoc-instead-of-abcs/>

“I would like to know so I can address it at home and talk to my child,” Hu said.

Higginbotham told The Post that “I never expected people who cling to the oppressive, dying institutions of patriarchy and white supremacy to like that book.”

She said the book was about “boundless love and the divinity of everything” and also insisted that the “Black Jesus I depict in the book is no Democrat.”

The DOE said it compiled a list of the titles under the umbrella of Mosaic funding at the direction of the previous mayoral administration.

Former Mayor de Blasio [announced](#) the new curriculum in July 2021 with the intent to standardize instruction and “better reflect” the system’s diversity.

The DOE said neither “What You Don’t Know” and “Our Skin” were not part of a “prescribed” curriculum and that parents could discuss their concerns with their school principal.

“Our public schools do not shy away from books that teach our students history and can be used to deepen their understanding of the world around them. We value and honor our students’ perspectives and identities, and we provide opportunities for family voices to be heard on topics including school book selections,” a spokesman said.

## The Children Who Regret Their Sex Change

*One of the biggest health scandals of our time is the sex change of children who ask for it, without measuring the consequences.*

The French National Academy of Medicine speaks about a phenomenon of epidemic appearance. A psychoanalyst at the Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital, who receives young people concerned by the [transgender question](#), calls it a “tidal wave.”

The young people who express sexual identity confusion are indeed more and more numerous ... and younger and younger. More and more frequently they are reporting that they have the feeling that they belong to the other sex than their own, or sometimes to “no sex” at all.

Many of them begin social transitions (by changing their first name, appearance and behavior) and sometimes medical intervention (by injecting hormones, having surgery, and for the youngest, by administering puberty blockers).

In France, as in many countries, the numbers and their increase are staggering. For example, the number of ALD (Affection Longue Durée) beneficiaries with a diagnosis of [transidentity](#) or gender dysphoria shows 10 times more admissions in 2020 than in 2013. Requests for access to surgery for breast or genital procedures or removal have increased fourfold between 2012 and 2020.

A child psychiatrist in charge of an adolescent reception center (CAA) in Paris attests to this: “Ten years ago, we had about 10 requests per year, today it’s 10 requests per month, just for the Île-de-France region.”

### ***Detransitioners***

But today, many young people who regret it are coming out of the woodwork. They are called “detransitioners.” Have they, with time, finally “reconciled” with their sex? In the meantime, they have been deceived. And it is often too late. Their uneasiness has led them on the highway of transition, a journey sometimes without return, as some decisions are irremediable.

This is the case of Anna, who has recently given her testimony in the columns of *Le Parisien* (May 3, 2022). As a teenager, she discovered [transgenderism](#) on the Internet and found herself there. Her parents fully supported her.

After a few medical appointments that she herself qualifies as “expeditious”, she started testosterone at 14, became Sacha, and underwent a mastectomy (removal of the breasts) at 16.

At no time were the deep reasons that pushed me to change sex discussed.

At 19, her descent into hell began. She could not conquer “this new sex.” She is now filled with regret. She realizes that she is indeed a woman, but now with a flat chest and a deep voice. She stopped taking hormones. Her periods came back, and she hopes that her fertility will not be permanently altered. Today, she deplors that “at no time were the deep reasons that pushed me to change sex discussed.” “I was put on a track,” she says and she now realizes that “puberty is not the ideal period to make such choices.”

### *The Case Of Keira Bell*

Anna's case is not isolated. Associations of detransitioners are emerging in the United States, Canada, Belgium, England, Sweden ... In the United Kingdom, the case of Keira Bell has hit the headlines and put this painful subject in the spotlight.

The longer I transitioned, the more I realized that I was not a man and never would be. As I matured, I realized that gender dysphoria was a symptom of my overall misery, not the cause.

This young woman, who became a trans man, filed a lawsuit against the clinic that treated her. She claims that she did not have the capacity to consent, even though she was the one who asked for this medical transition.

“The longer I transitioned, the more I realized that I was not a man and never would be. As I matured, I realized that gender dysphoria was a symptom of my overall misery, not the cause,” she explains. The case was just resolved.

She lost her case, even though the High Court in London had put a stop to the prescription of puberty blockers for children, ruling that before the age of 13 “it is highly unlikely that a child would be competent to consent to the administration of puberty blockers” and that before the age of 16, they can only take the treatment if they understand the immediate and long-term consequences.

Many trans men talk about how you can't cry with a high dose of testosterone in your body, and that affected me too: I couldn't release my emotions. One of the first signs that I was becoming Keira again was that – thankfully, finally – I was able to cry.

Obviously, the difficulty lies not so much in the quality of the information given and received, but in the capacity of the children to understand and evaluate this information, to conceive the scope of such decisions which will make them patients for life. How, for example, can we measure the consequences of fertility loss when we are still far from any desire for a child? Keira Bell shares her unvarnished story. “Five years after I began my medical transition to male, I began the detransition process. Many trans men talk about how you can't cry with a high dose of testosterone in your body, and that affected me too: I couldn't release my emotions. One of the first signs that I was becoming Keira again was that — thankfully, finally — I was able to cry. And I had a lot to cry about.”

### *A Cry For Help*

In the face of these dramas, voices are being raised. The Academy of Medicine calls for the attention of the medical community and asks that “great medical caution be exercised in children and adolescents, taking into account the vulnerability, in particular psychological, of this population and the numerous undesirable effects, even serious complications, that some of the available therapies may cause.” Addressing parents, the Academy recommends that they be vigilant when faced with their children's questions about [transidentity](#) or their discomfort, underlining the addictive character of excessive consultation of social networks which is harmful to the psychological development of young people and responsible for a very important part of the growth of the feeling of gender incongruence.

A real cry of alarm was launched in a [column in l'Express](#) by several associations of childhood professionals as

well as 50 thinkers – doctors, intellectuals, psychologists, judges, sociologists, feminist activists – of very different horizons of thought, including: Elisabeth Badinter, Jean-Pierre Winter, Chantal Delsol, Rene Frydman and Xavier Emmanuelli: “It is urgent to inform the greatest number of

citizens, of all professions, of all sides, of all ages, on what could well appear tomorrow as one of the greatest health and ethical scandals, which we would have watched happen without a word: the commodification of children’s bodies.”

Blanche Streb

<https://aleteia.org/2022/05/28/the-children-who-regret-their-sex-change/>

## Read Cardinal Sarah's Commencement Address At Christendom College

Addressing the graduates of Christendom College this month, Cardinal Robert Sarah, Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for Divine Worship, focused on the virtue of practical wisdom, or prudence, “the crown of the virtues.”

We are called “to act contrary to the tendencies in ourselves and in others that obscure the middle way of virtuous action. To act decisively, after mature deliberation, so that we might live in the freedom that formation in virtue affords. And to reveal to the world by our choices the beautiful arrangement of the values that God integrates within each of us — in other words, to reveal the vocations that gives to each of us,” the cardinal said May 14 on the campus in Front Royal, Virginia.

“Let us consider carefully the deliberations that we must undertake and the array of challenges that we face, which are grave and which are not.”

During the commencement ceremony, Sarah was given an honorary doctorate of humane letters.

Find below the full text of Cardinal Sarah's commencement address:

### ***I. Introduction***

“Christendom.” The name of a Catholic college that unabashedly places Christ as its center. With a distinct mission to restore all things in Christ — *instaurare omnia in Christo* (Ephesians 1:10) —and to rebuild Christendom, so that our culture may be inspired again by Jesus Christ and what He left us. Today, I am honored to graduate from such a College. I am proud to be a member of the Class of 2022!

Fellow graduates: you leave today from Christendom College as confident and courageous disciples of Jesus Christ, having been equipped with a solid Catholic formation in an extraordinary time. Thank you to your parents, benefactors, the President, Faculty and staff of the College, who have made your formation possible. Formation that is open to the True, the Good and the Beautiful, wherever that is found, as enlightened by the truths of Divine Revelation as found in Sacred Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church. For those of you who have been here for at least four years, your formation at Christendom has been marked by a global pandemic, by the most divisive national election in the living memory of this country, and by the ongoing threat of major war in Europe for the first time since World War II. All along, the liquidation of God and moral relativism with the creation of false moral norms become ever more widespread. The Evil One is at work to sow confusion even in terms of our most basic identity as men and women, created in the divine image and likeness from the very first moment of conception in the womb of the mother — a demonic, spiritual revolt against what we have received from God, the gift of grace.

Every university exists to form its students for the challenges that they will face. For a Catholic college, like Christendom, that means having the courage to adhere to the faith of the Church, even if that contradicts the scheme of the modern world. If it recognizes what is in its nature to do, every university seeks to cultivate in its students the good habits of virtue, which fortify them for all the years ahead. The mission of Christendom College is precisely this. I quote: “The chief goal of the academic program is to form intellectual virtues in the

students. Man is called not only to know the truth, but to love it, and to make it the formative principle of his life.”

I hope that the extraordinary events of the last years have impressed upon your minds and hearts all the more deeply the beauty of virtue, the perennial value of firm and settled dispositions to know and love what is true and good. You and I — all of us here — will need it. In the years ahead, we will all lean on the habits that we have formed, on the formation that we have received. It is the foundation of virtue, aided by grace, that allows us to perceive clearly and to respond generously to the persons and situations and opportunities that God places before us.

## ***II. Practical Wisdom***

In the few minutes that I have to speak with you, there are two aspects of virtue on which I would like to reflect. Both concern the virtue of prudence, or practical wisdom. I have deliberately chosen this topic as the focus of this Commencement Address, since the motto of Christendom College — *instaurare omnia in Christo* — entails precisely this: to sum up every aspect of creation in Christ, who is “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6). I expect that most of you will have spent some time while at Christendom getting to know the work of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. According to the Aristotelian and Thomistic tradition, practical wisdom is the crown of the virtues, which we attain supernaturally by grace, but naturally only after we have formed all the other moral virtues. These other virtues enable us to perceive clearly and to respond rightly to specific goods, such as wealth or health or honor. Practical wisdom, by contrast, enables us to integrate these goods, to discern how they fit together within each of our lives and in accord with each of the vocations given to us by God.

Practical wisdom, therefore, is key to our moral development. In the order of nature, the attainment of the natural virtue of practical wisdom is the culmination of our journey to moral maturity. In the order of grace, its perfection helps us to imitate Christ, to fulfill His command: “Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). I pray that God bless every one of you with the wisdom that you will need in the journeys that commence today.

## ***III. Taking Time for Deliberation***

I said that I would reflect on two aspects of practical wisdom. The first is this: Practical wisdom enables us to make decisions. In the next weeks, months and years, you will be making decisions that change your lives and can change the world. Not just any decisions, but difficult decisions, decisions that draw upon multiple perspectives and multiple virtues, decisions that involve competing goods or conflicts of interest. When faced with such a decision, it is a virtue unto itself — or an aspect of practical wisdom — to understand how quickly or how slowly to arrive at a conclusion.

Noting this is of great help: You need not rush. Nor should you delay. How we arrive at the right balance, the right speed, is something that we learn through practice. We get better at making decisions, and at pacing our decisions, through practice and through listening carefully to the advice of our elders. For those of you who face great decisions on the horizon, and perhaps feel anxiety or stress about them, this advice might bring little consolation. But I shall not leave it there.

We can extract from Aristotle some more detail. He suggests that taking time for deliberation before we make a decision is

itself a good, a good which we ought not overvalue or undervalue. He recommends that we deliberate slowly in most cases. First, he recommends that we give more time to more grave choices and less time to less grave choices. In other words, we ought not distract ourselves over lesser things, and fail to give adequate attention to what matters more and to what matters most.

Second, he recommends that we seek further clarity in a situation only to the degree that the field under consideration allows for it. For example, there was no way for any of you to guarantee ahead of time that the choice of Christendom would be the best choice of school for you. The process of choosing a school does not admit of such a guarantee. The choice of a school always involves a risk. Likewise, in any domain, we should respect the degrees to which we may attain certainty, on the one hand, or to which we must admit uncertainty, on the other. This point too saves us time and protects us from needless worry. It sharpens our deliberation and discernment.

Finally, Aristotle acknowledges that we do not always have the time that we might like for deliberation and discernment. Sometimes situations demand that we make decisions, even momentous decisions, quickly. It is in times like these that the value of the habits that we have formed and the formation that we have received is clearest of all. In these moments, when a decision is demanded of us, we fall back on what we have practiced. We fall back on the insights with which we have grown familiar and on the skills that we have developed over many years. It is then that we are most grateful for our firm and settled dispositions to know and love what is true and good. This was the first characteristic of practical wisdom that I wanted to discuss: It is a distinct aspect of practical wisdom to

understand how quickly or slowly to arrive at a conclusion in a given situation. You need not rush. Nor should you delay. This is a skill for each of you to acquire.

#### *IV. An Example of Practical Wisdom: St. Ignatius of Loyola*

The second characteristic upon which I would like to reflect is not a systematic component of practical wisdom but a particular example of its appearance. It is an example both fitting and startling in light of our experience of the pandemic and comes from the autobiography of St. Ignatius of Loyola. I quote:

“At that time the plague was beginning to spread in Paris ... Ignatius [entered a house in which there were many corpses of those who had died of the plague, and he] consoled and revived a sick man he found lying there. When he had touched the wounds with his hand, Ignatius departed alone. His hand began to cause him great pain, and it seemed as if he had caught the disease. The fear that came upon him was so great that he was unable to vanquish and drive it away, until with a great effort he placed his fingers in his mouth, and for a long time kept them there, saying [to himself], ‘If you have the plague in your hand, you will also have it in your mouth.’ As soon as this was done, the illusion left him and the pain he had felt in his hand ceased.”

After caring for a sick man, Ignatius worried that he too had been infected. If he had had a deeper understanding of bubonic plague, he would have known that infection would not have been indicated by pain in his hand. But that is beside the point. What is striking is his deliberate action. He puts what he takes to be his infected hand in his mouth. He does not want to fear infection. He prefers to

have the infection, and to know that he has it, rather than to fear it. For us, after the enormous sacrifices made to reduce the spread of COVID, the action of Ignatius might appear utterly reckless, even offensive.

But his action brings to light something profound, or rather a series of profound insights. First, you are all familiar with the claim that virtue seeks the mean, the middle way between two extremes. In order to hit the middle, virtuous action must often overshoot its target. When we naturally incline to one extreme, such as fear for our own health, virtue must tend toward the opposite extreme, again and again, until what is truly the middle way becomes clear to us. What may appear to be an extreme action by St. Ignatius perhaps allowed him to find the mean. He feared that he had already been infected with bubonic plague. By his dramatic action, he did not expose himself anew but simply disciplined his own fear. He rebuked himself, prohibiting fear from troubling him, from discouraging him from tender care for the sick, and from distracting him from the work of God.

Second, Ignatius' action is decisive. Once he has spread the infection to his mouth, according to his own understanding of the plague, there is no turning back. Beforehand, he was greatly troubled. He could not contain his fear. Different goods, different interests pulled him in different directions. In those minutes or hours of anxiety, he must have undertaken some form of deliberation, as much as his overwhelming fear would permit — considering, on the one hand, the value of his health, his natural fear of death, his fear of suffering the agony of plague, and then, on the other hand, his vocation to service, the freedom to which God calls us all, and the judgment before God that awaits us after

death. Once these factors were weighed and considered, he acted suddenly. No further deliberation was necessary. There was no need for delay. And by his action, the tension is resolved. He has made his choice.

This is the third insight that we can glean from Ignatius' account. Not only does virtuous action appear to be extreme at times, and not only is it decisive, it reveals a choice. Practical wisdom culminates in decision. It commits us to one path instead of others. And in so doing, it re-arranges the values in our lives. It reorders how they appear to us and how they appear to others.

The choice of Ignatius to risk his life to overcome his fear affects us all. He presents to us courage and self-sacrifice and perhaps even a degree of foolhardiness as choice worthy and preferable to overwhelming fear of disease. Health is a legitimate good, which we ought to take care to preserve. So, the choice of Ignatius was not simply an act of courage. It was a decision of practical wisdom, aided by the supernatural perspective on life and death that comes from Christian faith. He shaped his life in that moment, and set before us all a startling manifestation of human choice and human virtue.

## *V. Conclusion*

It is to such action that we here today are called. Not necessarily to expose ourselves to disease. But to act contrary to the tendencies in ourselves and in others that obscure the middle way of virtuous action. To act decisively, after mature deliberation, so that we might live in the freedom that formation in virtue affords. And to reveal to the world by our choices the beautiful arrangement of the values that God integrates within each of us — in other words, to reveal the vocations that He gives

to each of us. I propose to all of you to carry the account of St. Ignatius in your heart, knowing that God will call you, too, to surprising, startling, and decisive choices that will shape your lives and the lives of all around you.

We live in a time of crises — a time that demands of us decision after decision to respond to the immense challenges that we face and that will shape our lives and the lives of generations to come. I think of Saint Joseph, who is rightly called the “Terror of Demons,” since he made decisions without delay in obedience to God’s Word. At yesterday’s Baccalaureate Mass, I invited you to take Mary “into your own home,” “into your own affairs” and into every aspect of your lives. Today, I invite you also to “go to Saint Joseph.” *Ite ad Joseph*. With the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph at our sides, let us rise to the challenge. Let us thank God for the formation that we have received. Let us consider carefully the deliberations that we must undertake and the

array of challenges that we face, which are grave and which are not.

Our most profound deliberations and our clearest vision of what lies ahead come to us when our hearts rest in silence. Especially silence before the Lord in the Eucharist — either in the silence of Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament or in the sonorous thread of silence that runs through the Holy Mass. Before Him, in light of faith and in the grace of the sacraments, we receive the greatest help in confronting the crises that we face and in choosing rightly and in accord with His will. By recognizing the responsibilities to which we are called, and by taking the appropriate time to deliberate, especially in silence, and to respond to the challenges ahead with practical wisdom, we will fulfill our vocations and reveal to the world the beautiful constellation of values that God shapes within each of us in order to “restore all things in Christ” and so to rebuild Christendom.

CNA Staff

<https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2022/05/25/read-cardinal-sarahs-commencement-address-at-christendom-college/>

## Free Online Class On Greatest Literature Of Western Civilization Available From Christendom College

*From Homer to 'The Hobbit,' the class explores heroes and their meaning for us today.*

Christendom College is offering a free online course called “Journey Through the Great Works of Literature.”

The five-lecture series will examine the greatest literature of Western civilization, “from Homer to The [Hobbit](#).”

Christendom’s website touted the course as an antidote to “cancel culture”:

“Today, the greatest literary works of Western civilization are often cancelled or suppressed. However, these books need to be read and understood in order to communicate important truths about ourselves and the world around us.”

The course focuses on the virtues of literary heroes, and how they reflect the values of the past and the present. Dr. Ben Reinhard, an Assistant Professor of English Language and Literature at Christendom College, where he teaches courses in classical and medieval literature, will teach the course. Reinhard

Zelda Caldwell

<https://aleteia.org/2022/06/04/free-online-class-on-greatest-literature-of-western-civilization-available-from-christendom-college>

received his Ph.D. from the Medieval Institute at the University of Notre Dame, writing his dissertation on Old English religious literature.

Participants will study:

The glory and limitations of Achilles and how Virgil critiques and refines the Homeric hero.

How the character of the knight developed and endured into the modern world.

The Enlightenment’s rejection of Christianity and the advent of the “anti-hero.”

Tolkien’s creation of a new kind of hero allowed him to advance traditional ideas about the hero in a secularized and skeptical modern age.

To register, click [here](#).

## **Most Catholic Schools Can't Accommodate Kids With Disabilities; This Woman Is Changing That**

*Francesca Pellegrino is removing a major barrier to Catholic education.*

Catholic schools are famous for offering a great education, but often they [aren't able to include children with disabilities](#).

A lack of resources means that many [Catholic schools struggle to accommodate all children](#):

“Because disability practices aren't uniform across Catholic schools, families wanting a Catholic education for their disabled children often encounter tough choices ... One of the biggest problems with serving students with disabilities in Catholic school is the lack of resources.”

The lack of accommodation forces many families not to send their children to Catholic schools, even if they desire a Catholic education for them.

So it's exciting and encouraging to hear about work being done to find a place for children with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities in Catholic education.

Francesca Pellegrino is the President and Founder of the [Catholic Coalition for Special Education, Inc. \(CCSE\)](#). She spearheads this important work — and the mission is a deeply personal one.

Aleteia had the chance to sit down with her for a conversation, and she explained why she's so passionate about inclusive education in Catholic schools.

“When my son was born 30 years ago, my life was really turned upside down and inside out. His early years were fraught with medical issues with him in and out of medical care. I became angry and dejected and suffered a crisis of faith. Thanks to the

support of my husband and his unwavering faith, a transformation took place in me and I realized I couldn't stay in that angry, unhealthy place. That's how my journey began, from hopelessness to action. I saw a need and saw that something had to be done to fill that need.”

Francesca began talking to parents, clergy, and teachers. She saw that many other families with children with disabilities wanted to send their children to Catholic schools.

Many were deeply frustrated that they had to send their child with disabilities to a different school alone while all the other siblings went to Catholic school together.

Her son never did attend Catholic school, but Francesca is determined to make it possible for other children with disabilities to find a supportive and welcoming place at Catholic schools.

CCSE supports the creation and expansion of special education instruction and programs in Catholic schools in Washington, D.C., and Maryland. It also gives support to parents on the journey of raising a child with a disability. These services are offered free-of-charge to schools and families of children with disabilities.

“We build the capacity of Catholic schools to enroll students with disabilities by providing seed funding to initiate or expand inclusive programming, as well as pro bono technical assistance in the form of coaching, workshops, and other resources to help a

school be the best it can be at supporting students with disabilities,” Francesca said.

CCSE also has a partnership with [The Academy of Catholic Educators](#). As part of CCSE’s programming, it hires faculty from the university to visit selected schools regularly to help troubleshoot and consult on issues teachers and children may have.

After years of increasing success at the elementary and middle school level, CCSE is actively seeking Catholic high schools to open their doors to students with disabilities. So far there’s been a shortage of Catholic high schools stepping up to the plate

CCSE is present in two dioceses: Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland. But their work is gaining national attention.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has invited CCSE to participate in the [synod](#) consultations on the national level about special education inclusion in Catholic schools.

“There is a lot of demand for these programs around the country,” Francesca said. “It’s a very hopeful sign that things are opening up and moving in the right direction.”

These consultations are open for anyone, anywhere in the world, to attend, thanks to an online option. The next one will take place Thursday, June 16 at 7:00 p.m. at the

Theresa Civantos Barber

<https://aleteia.org/2022/06/11/most-catholic-schools-cant-accommodate-kids-with-disabilities-this-woman-is-changing-that>

Catholic University of America, and [you can find more information and register here](#).

“The synod is calling for a journeying together,” Francesca said, “But in families with kids with disabilities, there’s still a sense of isolation that they’re in it alone and they don’t have the kind of support that they might need from their parish community.”

CCSE is a critical missing piece to make Catholic education accessible for all children. We certainly hope to see its efforts spread and be replicated all over the world.

Ultimately, this inclusivity is a profound expression of our Catholic faith. It’s beneficial not only to children with disabilities but to all the children of the school. Francesca said,

“As Catholics we believe we are one body in Christ, and that body is only complete when all members are present, so this is really a fulfillment of the purpose of Catholic schools. Inclusion of students with disabilities doesn’t just impact them, but it shapes the entire student body. When kids with and without disabilities learn alongside each other, kids without disabilities learn important life lessons, become better equipped to care for their own kids with disabilities or aging relatives with disabilities, and are better prepared as adults to serve people with disabilities in a professional capacity.”

## The Vet Said We Should Put Down Our Elderly Dog; Our Young Son Had Other Plans

*My son was learning to love unconditionally:  
"It's good that you exist, even when you no longer bring me pleasure or utility."*

A while ago, we took our dog Dogo to the vet, who told us it was time to put him to sleep—that he was already very old, and would only be a problem to take care of.

"I'll never do it, and I'll take care of him forever!" exclaimed my 8-year-old son, with great determination to save our pet.

The truth was that we all loved Dogo, who from puppyhood and during his prime gave us pleasant company, being funny and playful. In addition to that, he gave us valuable service as a zealous guardian of our home.

Now, he was almost blind, with several teeth missing and very little energy. He spent a lot of time lying down and had painful lesions as a result, in addition to other varied ailments due to old age.

"But, son ..." I tried to argue, agreeing with what the veterinarian had said.

My son scolded me vehemently: "For me, it will always be good that Dogo exists, and he needs me!"

A light went on in my conscience, and I understood.

Loving implies caring.

My son was learning to love with the noblest disposition of which a person is capable by saying, "It's good that you exist, even when you no longer bring me pleasure or utility."

Moreover, the determination of his attitude could be interpreted as saying, "In your limitations, not only do you not cause me discomfort, but because of you I can continue to go out of myself towards your goodness, and that makes me grow and be happy. I also know that my love makes you happy, and that's all you need to keep on living."

You are mine, and I am yours.

And indeed, he lovingly took care of our dog so that he would be as comfortable as possible without ever feeling alone. In a mystery of love, Dogo, making an effort, wagged his tail and returned his love with licks, until one morning he no longer woke up.

Through his pet, my son learned a sublime lesson that he will later experience in his relationship with people — especially with the person he may eventually choose as his spouse: the truth of authentic personal love.

This capacity for selfless love is part of our being, and it allows us to love beyond the pleasure or utility that our beloved's existence can provide us. It transcends our senses alone, to grasp other people's deepest value, their deepest truth, for which they deserve to be loved in themselves and for themselves.

It's a truth that can be expressed with words such as, "I don't love you because having you around brings me pleasure; I don't love you because it's useful for me that you exist; I don't love you because I need you to exist

to satisfy my needs. I love you just for being who you are. How good it is that you exist in and of yourself! I offer myself to help you to bring to fullness the best of yourself.”

“Therefore, I will love you in the fullness of your attractiveness and capabilities—and I will love you no less when, in the twilight of your existence, you find yourself devoid of everything, in the limits of old age or illness. Devoid of everything but the ability to give and receive love when you need it most.”

Orfa Astorga

<https://aleteia.org/2022/06/13/the-vet-said-we-should-put-down-our-elderly-dog-our-young-son-had-other-plans>

So deep is this need to love and be loved that many sick and elderly people languish in the absence of love. Their health declines and they leave us before their time. With love, they could have lived longer, like the end of a lit candle that is consumed and melts away in the process of giving light.

Authentic personal love can rely on the strength of the spirit to love in a deep and authentic way, by which we perceive and love someone in the proper measure of their being and truth.

## Class Size Matters Only As a UFT Dodge To Gain Control Of Schools

Parents and fiscal watchdogs agree: Gov. Kathy Hochul should veto the Legislature's 11th-hour [sabotage of mayoral control of New York City schools](#), with an unfunded poison pill of an NYC-only mandate for smaller class sizes.

Last Friday, a diverse group of parents rallied in front of Hochul's Manhattan office [to demand a veto](#). Signs included: "Mayoral control, not controlled mayor!!"

Vetoing the ugly mayoral-control bill (which waters down the mayor's power) would oblige her to call the Legislature back to pass a clean one, since control otherwise will lapse June 30.

But the gov can just nix the measure to cap class sizes at between 25 and 20 students for various grades. City Hall's preliminary analysis shows that would cost \$1 billion a year to implement.

Post Editorial Board

<https://nypost.com/2022/06/13/class-size-matters-only-as-a-uft-dodge-to-gain-control-of-schools>

As the [Empire Center's Peter Warren argues](#), the mandate is simply a gift to the United Federation of Teachers, which would get more jobs for its members plus special powers over how the mayor and chancellor implement the order.

[Citizens Budget Commission chief Andrew Rein urges](#) a veto because the class-size mandate requires "significant new spending" with zero evidence the outlays would boost "learning outcomes." Notably, the mandate would force rapid hiring of rookie teachers to meet the class-size quotas, surely "negating some of the potential benefits."

Offsetting cuts to pay for those new teachers threaten other valuable programs, from AP and gifted classes to the mayor's new initiative to better help kids with dyslexia. If Hochul is a true ally of Mayor Adams, she'll veto at least the class-size mandate.

## Parents Say Public Schools Make ‘Gender Identity’ Decisions For Them Without Telling Them

Lawsuits triggered by such practices have been filed in several states, including a Massachusetts case where a teacher was fired after advising parents about what was occurring without their knowledge.

In early March 2021, a sixth-grade social studies teacher informed the parents of an 11-year-old that the student had announced a new gender identity to teachers at school.

Later that month, the principal put the teacher on administrative leave for disclosing what had happened at the school to the child’s parents and subsequently fired her.

The principal cited “conduct unbecoming a teacher relating to your inappropriate contact with the parents of a student,” according to a federal lawsuit filed last month on behalf of the parents, Stephen Foote and Marissa Silvestri, against the school committee and several school staff members at Paul R. Baird Middle School, a public school in Ludlow, a town in western Massachusetts.

The Ludlow case is one of several lawsuits that have been filed in the United States in recent months by parents claiming that public-school officials have violated their constitutional rights to make mental health and religious-upbringing decisions for their children in the context of “gender identity” issues.

Comparable cases have been filed in Wisconsin, Oregon, California and Florida.

### *Emotional Problems and Gender Identity*

A typical example, said Vernadette Broyles, a lawyer familiar with such cases, stems from an adolescent with emotional problems such as depression, anxiety or low self-esteem who finds YouTube videos suggesting that the root of the child’s emotional pain is the wrong gender identity. The student then floats the idea to a teacher or guidance counselor, who affirms the student’s suggestion, holds counseling sessions without the parents’ knowledge, and instructs other staff members and students to use different pronouns and to call the student by a new opposite-gender first name without first informing the parents.

“We are seeing a pattern across the nation where school officials are deliberately deceiving or concealing from parents that they are affirming their child’s gender confusion,” Broyles told the Register in a telephone interview.

School officials who support such practices said they are necessary in order to support the student, honor confidentiality and provide a “safe space” that the student may not have even at home.

Broyles, a lawyer who represents the Foote family in the Ludlow case, told the Register it’s a bad approach that harms the children it’s supposed to help.

“Children are developmentally in need of the judgment and the wisdom of their adult parents to make these significant and life-changing decisions for them,” said Broyles, president and founder of the [Child and Parental Rights Campaign](#), a law firm with an office in Georgia that seeks “to defend parents’ rights to shield them from the impacts of gender-identity ideology.”

“When you drive a wedge between a parent and his or her child, you’re putting that child at risk at a time when the child needs their parent the most,” she said.

### ***Florida Girl Tried to Kill Herself***

Broyles is also one of three lawyers representing the parents of a 12-year-old biological female [in Clay County, Florida](#), who tried to hang herself in a school bathroom in early January 2022 after experiencing turmoil concerning gender identity.

The girl likes sports and video games, and she was bullied at school last fall by fellow students who told her those were boy activities, according to court papers. A friend told her she might be transgender, and the girl, according to court papers, “began to think she could be transgender too because she wanted to be strong and free ‘like a boy.’”

A counselor at the school “endorsed the belief that [the student] could be a boy,” court papers state, and started calling the student by a masculine name without telling the parents. The counselor also told the student she would get teachers and other students to start calling the student by the new masculine name. The girl subsequently experienced humiliation at school.

On Jan. 4, 2022, according to the complaint, the student tried to kill herself at the school — although school officials later said they weren’t aware of the attempt. The next day, the student tried again. This time, school officials called the parents to the school. The student was involuntarily committed to a mental-health facility and later released to her parents.

Before that day, the complaint states, the parents “had not received any information from the school that [the student] was experiencing distress or exhibiting signs of gender confusion. Nor did they receive any information from the school that [the student] was being bullied at school and feeling insecure about being a girl, which was apparently happening.”

School officials blamed the suicide attempt on the parents’ “perceived lack of agreement with their daughter’s gender confusion because of their Catholic Christian faith,” according to the parents’ complaint, which also states that the parents and their daughter “are practicing Roman Catholics whose sincerely held religious beliefs, including a Judeo-Christian worldview based on natural law and objective truth, permeate all aspects of their lives.”

The school district is contesting the parents’ case. Lawyers for the school district have claimed in court papers, “Many of [the parents’] allegations are materially false,” without yet getting into details, and have argued that the parents’ rights were not violated. The case is pending in the Jacksonville Division of the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida.

### ***The Massachusetts Case***

In late February 2021, the 11-year-old student in Ludlow sent an email message to teachers at the school announcing that she was “genderqueer” and wanted to be known by a new masculine name and new pronouns. The next day, according to documents associated with the case, the school guidance counselor sent an email message to other staff members telling them about the new student’s new gender identity.

A social studies teacher, Bonnie Manchester, who had previously contacted the parents about the student’s mental-health struggles, informed the parents about the student’s new gender identity during the first week of March. When the parents complained to Principal Stacy Monette that school officials were acting against their wishes, the principal removed Manchester.

The Ludlow dispute has sparked two legal conflicts. One involves the parents against school officials, which is a pending lawsuit. The other involves the social studies teacher who informed the parents and who is contesting her firing.

The teacher, Manchester, an evangelical Christian, quotes Scripture [on her legal-defense fundraising webpage](#), on which she also says: “... my school is asking me to lie to the parents of an 11-year-old student, a practice that I believe is deeply harmful to them and to any person who seeks to nurture the values of empathy and understanding; this request lacks ethical standing. The school has taken the authority as the parent and has made the parent the enemy.”

Ludlow school officials haven’t said much publicly since the parents’ lawsuit was filed April 12 in U.S. district court. James “Chip” Harrington, the chairman of the Ludlow School Committee, a locally elected board that oversees the town’s public schools, referred questions from the Register to the school district’s interim superintendent, Lisa Nemeth, who could not be reached for comment by deadline.

A lawyer representing the school district was granted extra time last week by the judge in the case to respond to the parents’ complaint. The lawyer could not be reached for comment. Efforts to reach the principal

and the guidance counselor were also unsuccessful.

### ***Tense Public Meeting***

Last year, while controversy was swirling around the teacher’s dismissal, school committee members and the superintendent of schools discussed the school district’s gender-identity practices during a tense virtual public meeting on May 25, 2021.

An email message from a 10th grader read aloud during the public-comment period accused school officials of ignoring parents’ rights and “pushing an agenda” on students ages 11 through 14.

“This agenda has been trying to convince them to change who they are — change their sexuality and gender, at an age that many kids don’t fully understand either,” the high-school sophomore wrote, [according to a video clip of the meeting](#) posted online by MassResistance, a pro-family organization that has closely tracked the Ludlow case.

The superintendent of schools at the time, Todd Gazda, read a statement responding to the email message, saying that “intolerance and prejudice against LGBTQ individuals is being thinly veiled behind a camouflage by what is being asserted as parental rights.”

“It seems that there is a group of individuals who take exception to the inclusive practices of our schools. We take pride in the fact that we are an inclusive public-school system. The only message we are pushing is one of acceptance and inclusion. As an educational community, our staff strives to create an environment where every student and staff member feels safe, supportive and free to be themselves, regardless of race, sexual orientation, disability or gender identity. If anything, we do not do enough to support

these populations, and we need to do more,” Gazda said.

School is all some students have, he said.

“For many of our students, school is their only safe place, and that safety evaporates when they leave the confines of our buildings,” Gazda said.

### ***Disagreement Over State Policy***

Gazda (who has since taken another job) also said school officials in Ludlow have followed state law and guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

That’s a matter of dispute.

The [guidance](#) offered by the state agency says: “Transgender and nonconforming students may decide to discuss and express their gender identity openly and may decide when, with whom, and how much to share private information. A student who is 14 years of age or older, or who has entered the ninth grade, may consent to disclosure of information from his or her student record. If a student is 14 and is not yet in the ninth grade, the student’s parent (alone) has the authority to decide on disclosures and other student record matters.”

In the Foote lawsuit, the parents contended school officials concealed gender-identity information from them about two of their children who were both under 14 at the time. The Footes also said they informed school

Matthew McDonald

<https://www.ncregister.com/news/parents-say-public-schools-make-gender-identity-decisions-for-them-without-telling-them>

officials in December 2020 that they were seeking mental-health therapy for their 11-year-old daughter and that they asked school officials not to interfere. Instead, they said in the complaint, a school guidance counselor undermined their efforts by suggesting the student see another mental-health counselor because the student and the school guidance counselor “don’t have enough time together,” adding that the counselor said, “I can’t be there to keep you safe.”

The parents’ complaint argued that the school guidance counselor was “thereby planting or nurturing” in the student “the thought that her parents were not ‘safe.’”

Andrew Beckwith, a lawyer and president of the Massachusetts Family Institute, said Ludlow school officials were effectively trying to cut off the children from their parents.

“The school officials’ behavior sends the message that parents do not have the best interest of their children in mind. It assumes that children need to be protected FROM their parents, instead of BY their parents,” said Beckwith, a lawyer who is also representing the parents in the Ludlow case, by email.

“The facts are not really in question in this case. It’s really about the school’s policy, which hides students’ mental-health concerns from parents,” Beckwith said. “This constitutes an appalling and dangerous violation of the rights of parents.”

## **School Flying BLM And Gay Pride Flags Can No Longer Call Itself Catholic, Bishop Says**

The Bishop of the Diocese of Worcester issued a formal decree removing the Nativity School’s Catholic designation after the school refused to take down the flags, which he said contradict Catholic teaching.

A middle school in Worcester, Massachusetts was informed by the bishop of the Diocese of Worcester, Massachusetts that it has lost its Catholic designation after the school refused to stop flying Black Lives Matter and gay pride flags.

Bishop Robert McManus issued a formal decree to the Nativity School, informing them that the diocese would no longer support the school and that it could no longer call itself Catholic. The official decree comes months after the bishop requested in an open letter that the flags be taken down because they conflict with Catholic teaching.

The bishop wrote:

“I publicly stated in an open letter dated, May 4, 2022, that “these symbols (flags) embody specific agendas or ideologies (that) contradict Catholic social and moral teaching.” It is my contention that the “Gay Pride” flag represents support of gay marriage and actively living a LGBTQ+ lifestyle.”

The Catholic Church “unequivocally stands behind the phrase ‘black lives matter,’ McManus wrote, but the Black Lives Matter movement, he said, promotes a platform that “directly contradicts Catholic social teaching on the importance and role of the nuclear family and seeks to disrupt the family structure.”

In the [May 4 letter](#), Bishop McManus wrote that the Black Lives Matter movement “has co-opted the phrase and promotes a 13-principle agenda for schools ... those principles include, in their own words, to be ‘queer affirming’ and ‘trans affirming.’”

“The flying of these flags in front of a Catholic school sends a mixed, confusing and scandalous message to the public about the Church’s stance on these important moral and social issues,” he wrote.

“As Diocesan Bishop, it is my sacred duty and inherent responsibility to determine when a school claiming to be ‘Catholic’ is acting in such a way that is contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church and disregards my legitimate authority as the guardian and overseer of Catholic education in the Diocese of Worcester,” the statement continued.

“Despite my insistence that the school administration remove these flags because of the confusion and the properly theological scandal that they do and can promote, they refuse to do so. This leaves me no other option but to take canonical action,” he wrote.

Under the bishop’s decree, effective immediately, the Nativity School is prohibited from using the word “Catholic” to describe itself, and Mass and other sacraments will no longer be permitted to be take place.

### ***Response from the Nativity School***

Nativity President McKenney responded, according to Catholic Free Press: “In collaboration with the USA East Province of

the Society of Jesus, Nativity will seek to appeal the decision of the Diocese to remove our Catholic identity through the appropriate channels provided by the Church in circumstances like this.”

The Nativity School, a non-diocesan, Catholic-affiliated school, was founded in 2003 with the cooperation of the College of the Holy Cross, to serve underprivileged boys in grades five through eight. On its [website](#), the school is described itself as “an accredited, independent, Jesuit middle school that provides a quality, all-scholarship education to underserved boys of all faiths.”

In response to Bishop McManus’ complaint, McKenney [said in a statement](#) that the school

Zelda Caldwell

<https://aleteia.org/2022/06/16/school-flying-blm-and-gay-pride-flags-can-no-longer-call-itself-catholic-bishop-says>

began flying the rainbow and BLM flags early in 2021 “to remind our young men, their families and Nativity Worcester staff that all are welcome here and that they are valued and safe in this place. It says to them that they, in fact, do matter and deserve to be respected as our Christian values teach us.”

Students from The College of the Holy Cross circulated an online petition calling for Bishop McManus to be disinvited to the college’s commencement ceremonies after the bishop’s initial statements regarding the Nativity School and its flags. The bishop later announced that he would not attend the May 27 graduation.

## A Case For School Choice

*What is education for? Is it for the student, or is it for the school?*

Many observers of the Dec. 8 oral arguments at the Supreme Court in *Carson v. Makin* seem convinced the State of Maine is going to lose, and Register commentator Andrea Piccotti-Bayer has offered great insights why they should (see [here](#) and [here](#)). I'm also hopeful the Court will strike down Maine's discriminatory ban, but I want to argue there are unexplored dimensions of this case worth probing.

To recap: Maine has a program to pay private school tuition for children who lack a public school in their vicinity. The program allows payments to religious private schools, but not if they actually teach religion. The suit was brought by two families whose choice of religious school was barred by the program. They are seeking to have that limit declared unconstitutional.

Maine is a big state with not a lot of people, so sometimes there is no local public school. The program originated as an effort on the state's part to discharge its obligation that school-age children get an education when no local public school was around. The program did in fact fund attendance at private religious schools that taught religion until the 1970s when the Maine Attorney General concluded, on the basis of then-Supreme Court precedents (that era was the apex of judicial hostility to religious schools) that state money could not go to a school that actually taught religion.

Believers may be wondering whether this is a distinction without a difference, but there is a difference. There are many schools in the United States that were once established

by religious groups but have, over time, lost their religious identities without necessarily formally disassociating from the sponsoring denomination. (Not everybody was like many Catholic colleges who, having to choose between serving God and mammon, queued up for the Almighty ... Dollar. They formally severed ties with their originating communities, like the Jesuits, usually by creating independent, secular, and lay-dominated boards of trustees to insulate the entity — the school — from the original sponsoring religious order or diocese.)

Catholics, of course, instinctively connect being religious with doing religious things. The secular American mind very much disputes that nexus. The Constitution actually guarantees you the right to “free exercise of religion” (i.e., doing religious things) but you'll hear plenty of secularists instead lauding “freedom to believe.”

Don't let them pull that bait and switch!

“Freedom to believe” means you can think whatever you want inside your little head, but you have no right to make it any more public than that. Once upon a time, we might have said you believe what you want inside your church, “as long as you keep it in the sacristy,” but the tyrannical reach of numerous officials during COVID-19, claiming a right to regulate church attendance (numbers in churches, whether you can sing, whether you must segregate the redeemed vaxed from the unwashed unvaxed, etc.) shows that the state would like to get around to defining even church attendance as doing and not just believing. There were plenty of secularists last year who insisted you could

just as well worship through your computer screen. The even more aggressive (and their useful idiots among churchgoers) even dared tell you that abstaining from worship was “true Christianity” — “loving” your neighbor by staying away from him.

The Supreme Court ruled last year, when it struck down Blaine Amendments in state constitutions that simply prohibited funding to religious schools because they were religious, that you cannot discriminate on the basis of believing. In *Carson*, the Court’s been asked to strike down discrimination on the basis of doing.

Catholics probably see this as a slam dunk. Secularists want to shore up the dike of a meaningless distinction.

Most of the discussion on this case has turned around the religious dimension of the school. That’s probably because most of the discussion is controlled by lawyers, who like to limit the aperture of a discussion to a “question” they define. As a philosopher and theologian, I want to open the aperture.

I want to open it to the question: what is the state paying for?

Is the state paying for a “public” education, in the best approximation it can find? Maine’s attorney [argued](#) as much, saying the tuition payments are the state’s “default program” where there are no “public schools.” Asked then what makes a tony prep academy (which is covered) different from a school with religion in its curriculum, Maine admitted that the former is “not inculcating religion.”

In other words, religion is a disqualifying factor that renders one school qualitatively different (and, apparently, worse) from

another. That’s what, in Maine’s view, makes it most like a public school.

But is Maine really paying for a “public school education” or an “education?” For a long time, we’ve conflated those two concepts, but they are conceptually distinct, and perhaps we need to tease out that distinction.

A child in Maine subject to that state’s compulsory school attendance laws meets their requirements by attending a public school or a private school in which religion is taught. If attendance in a particular school meets compulsory schooling requirements, presumably that institution’s credentials also give their holder comparable rights and privileges, e.g., a grade school diploma entitles the student to attend high school. So, in terms of critical qualifications, those schools are equal and Maine believes that.

When it comes to enabling the student to go to those schools through the use of public funds, however, Maine suddenly draws a distinction between what it believes (the schools are equal for legal purposes) and what it does (subsidize a student’s tuition). Indeed, Maine has arguably changed its faith, because while it hitherto believed the public and private schools were equal for school attendance purposes, it now suddenly believes they are unequal for school funding purposes.

So, public and religious schools are sometimes equals, sometimes not.

This same sleight-of-hand is present in Maine’s Constitution. Article VIII, Part I, Section 1 declares that “A general diffusion of the advantages of education [is] essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people...” Now note the bait-and-switch: “to promote this important object”

the Legislature can require towns to pay “for the support and maintenance of public schools” (emphasis mine).

Do private religious schools that meet state school attendance requirements not contribute to the “general diffusion of the advantages of education?” Do they fail to foster “the rights and liberties of the people” (one of which is that people not be “hurt, molested, or restrained in that person’s liberty ... for worshipping God,” i.e., free exercise — Maine Constitution, Article I, section 3)?

A state would argue it made a policy choice how to promote the “general diffusion of the advantages of education.” My question: can it make that choice in a manner discriminatory to free exercise of religion?

In other words, has the state been mistaken in assuming that it was fostering “the rights and liberties of the people” by paying for a public education rather than for an education that met schooling requirements of the student’s own choice?

I see Carson as more than a case challenging vestiges of anti-religious discrimination. I would argue there are two forms of discrimination afoot here: anti-religious and pro-secularschooling discrimination.

Most states have provisions in their constitutions imposing some obligation on the legislature to support a “thorough and efficient” (New Jersey) or some other kind of “education” for students. The default position has been that this means a “public” education.

But does it necessarily mean a “public” education? If a school meets a state’s school attendance norms, why is it a second-class school for other purposes? Isn’t the whole reason we have compulsory school

attendance and require jurisdictions to support schools (I didn’t say “public schools”) is because we want to promote education?

Historically, there has been a fast-and-loose slide between what arguably is the state’s commitment to support education and the monopoly in certain critical aspects (mostly money) of public schools. That conflation has served various ideological goals in different eras. For the Nativists, it was a chance to “Americanize” students (i.e., make them generically and culturally Protestant). For the Deweyites and the schools of education they created, it was making “critical thinkers” who were not enslaved to readin’, ’ritin’ and ’rithmetic. For today, is it the commitment to immerse students in various ideologies, as the Virginia gubernatorial race showed and as some lawyers argued in the Carson case?

Isn’t it time we disentangled education from the public school?

The question that has always been lurking in the background is: what is education for? Is it for the student, or is it for the school? If the former, then any school the state deems imparting an education that meets its schooling requirements (and no state can outlaw religious schools — *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*) is suitable for the student and deserves educational support. In other words, the choice is the student’s, and impairing that choice is discriminatory. If the latter, then we’ve embraced the bizarre notion that the subject of education is a thing — a school — and students are simply animate furniture moving in and out of it.

I offer this outline of a vision to foster further refinement of an argument that can disestablish the privilege enjoyed by public schools enjoy over other equally qualified

educational institutions, in the hope that our educational praxis finally become

personalistic, i.e., finally reckon with what matters: children, not their school.

John Grondelski

<https://www.ncregister.com/blog/a-case-for-school-choice>

## **Green Bay Diocese Issues Gender Identity Policy Consistent With Biological Sex**

The Diocese of Green Bay has added a clause to its education policy manual that prohibits the use of pronouns and wearing clothes that do not align with a person's biological sex.

With 54 Catholic schools in the diocese, this policy will apply to around 9,000 students. It will also affect 12,000 people who attend religious education classes. The punishment for violation of the policy, which took effect July 1, can range from corrective action to suspension or expulsion.

"The Church teaches that our identities as male and female are part of God's good design in Creation, that our bodies and sexual identities are gifts from God, and that we should accept and care for our bodies as they were created," the policy reads.

In recent years, the Catholic Church has been challenged by an ideological shift from LGBTQ advocates. The Diocese of Lansing adopted a similar policy in January 2021, requiring that its schools, parishes, and charities recognize persons by the biological sex with which they were born.

"Gender dysphoria is a real psychological condition which causes real human suffering that has to be met with genuine compassion, rooted in truth and love, and accompanied by the highest standards of pastoral care," said Richard Budd, Director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life for the Diocese of Lansing.

Bishop Thomas Paprocki of Springfield in Illinois issued a pastoral guide regarding diocesan policies on gender identity in early 2020. He said that Catholics must support

those struggling with gender dysphoria with "compassion," but this does not mean compromising Catholic values.

"However, it must be clear that our schools and Church institutions (including sacramental records and school records) will refer to such persons with the gender pronouns, along with bathroom and locker room use and sports activities that acknowledge their God-given biology," said Paprocki.

Gender dysphoria is defined by the American Psychiatric Association as "clinically significant distress or impairment related to a strong desire to be of another gender, which may include desire to change primary and/or secondary sex characteristics." The Catholic response to this condition is not meant to be one of hatred for those struggling with their identity, but one of love and support.

The Congregation for Catholic Education in 2019 issued a sweeping denunciation of gender theory, and affirmed the principles of human dignity, difference, and complementarity. It said that "there is a need to reaffirm the metaphysical roots of sexual difference."

The result of this ideological trend, according to the congregation's assessment, is an undermining of the family.

"[In gender theory] the only thing that matters in personal relationships is the affection between the individuals involved, irrespective of sexual difference or procreation which would be seen as irrelevant in the formation of families."

Maisy Sullivan

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/251781/green-bay-diocese-issues-gender-identity-policy-consistent-with-biological-sex>

## **Controversial Florida Math Textbook Ignites Social-Emotional Learning Debate**

Critics sounded off on a math textbook in Collier County, Florida, approved by the [school board](#) that appeared to include emotionally based questions that appeared to have nothing to do with numbers or equations.

Included in a McGraw Hill fourth grade-math textbook are questions such as, "What are some ways you can connect with your classmates?" and "What behaviors show that you respect your classmates?" Gayle Repetto from Collier County in southwest Florida argued the inquiries were out of place.

"They have different areas of respect and community culture and working together in a safe environment," Repetto said. "And that really doesn't have anything to do with math."

Fox News contributor Karol Markowicz knocked the book materials as "woke nonsense."

"Parents need to understand that woke nonsense is creeping into their kids' education in a variety of ways," she told Fox News Digital. "It won't always be obvious. Social Emotional Learning sounds good but is just another way of taking academics out of the classroom and replacing it with something else."

The school board unanimously approved the textbook, with one school board member, Erick Carter, arguing that having students talk about their emotions in the classroom can help them better understand one another or look for warning signs, especially in light of recent school shootings.

"We have to find a place to start asking these questions! And, if we don't, we are not going to solve the violent problems we have going on and our emotional issues that we're having with our children. These questions have to be asked," Carter said.

The Florida Freedom to Read Project also approved the books, saying the office of Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and other groups were using "false assertions" against textbooks "to help push their narrative of 'woke liberal indoctrination' happening in the schools without ever being asked to provide actual proof." The group also credited SEL as being an important tool for students, particularly in the wake of two years of disrupted learning due to the [COVID-19 pandemic](#).

"As for SEL, most parents understand that the application of mathematics has a social component to it: problem solving, statistics, and budgeting all require an individual to utilize effective communication skills," Stephana Ferrell of the Florida Freedom to Read Project told Fox News Digital.

"Additionally, the last two years have set our children back in terms of social-emotional learning, and utilizing every opportunity to grow those skills while also learning a necessary subject is an effective use of student time."

Social-emotional learning (SEL) has become a nationwide debate in recent months. SEL is the process of developing the self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills that are vital for school, work, and life success, according to a description from the Committee for Children. The group argues that "people with strong social-emotional

skills are better able to cope with everyday challenges and benefit academically, professionally, and socially."

And the debate is hardly limited to a math textbook in Florida. Critics hit the Virginia Department of Education for releasing draft social and emotional learning standards that include statements that students could presumably make about themselves at certain grade levels. Many of them cover things like "bias" or identities in ways that reflect rhetoric in controversial diversity trainings.

One read: "I can understand that all my group identities and the intersection of those identities create unique aspects of who I am and influence my decisions."

Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction James Lane defended the proposals in a statement.

"By incorporating social emotional learning into Virginia public education, we are providing students practices ... to ensure readiness for college and workforce," he said. "This entails providing every student with the knowledge and skills he or she needs to succeed after graduation. We seek to extend the vision of social emotional learning in early childhood to PK-12, so that all students benefit from a positive, interactive and engaging environment." President Biden proclaimed an "International Social Emotional Learning

Cortney O'Brien

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/controversial-florida-math-textbook-ignites-social-emotional-learning-debate/>

Day" in March, dividing parents and education activists.

"Schools should be focused on teaching children core curriculum and not on asking intrusive questions that have nothing to do with core subjects," Parents Defending Education President Nicole Neilly told Fox News Digital. "Injecting Social Emotional Learning into math class not only distracts from teaching students the basics, but it also undermines the program's purpose - because higher self-esteem is a direct result of subject mastery."

The Collier County school district denied that the approved math textbook material was related to social-emotional learning in a statement to Fox News Digital.

"The K-5 mathematics instructional materials selected by the CCPS K-5 Mathematics Instructional Materials Review Committee were approved by the Florida Department of Education and are on the official state adopted list," the statement read. "Several community members that objected to the K-5 math instructional materials alleged that questions included in the textbooks were related to social emotional learning. However, evidence presented during the hearing refuted that allegation and demonstrated how the questions align to Florida's B.E.S.T. Standards for Mathematics."

## Ten Catholic Scientists And Inventors Everyone Should Know

*Meet devout popes, priests, friars, and laymen who invented everything from the mechanical clock to the Braille alphabet to the radio.*

July 22nd marks the two-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Gregor Mendel, the Austrian Augustinian friar known as the father of genetics. While the dominant narrative in the West since the Enlightenment has been that religion is obscurantist and hostile to science, until the twentieth century, it was in the Christian West where the most important scientific discoveries took place. Indeed, Europe's (and the world's) oldest and most prestigious universities – in Bologna, Oxford, Paris – began as Church institutions.

Here is a list — by no means exhaustive — of ten Catholic scientists and inventors whose discoveries have revolutionized our lives.

### **1). *Pope Sylvester II (946-1003)***

Here's a factoid to impress the guests at your next cocktail party: the mechanical clock was invented by a pope. Before his election as pope in 999, the Frenchman Gerbert of Aurillac was a Benedictine monk who went to Spain, then under Arab domination, to study mathematics. There, he learned the Hindu-Arabic digits. Later, Gerbert introduced the decimal system and reintroduced the forgotten abacus to Europe. In 996, he constructed the first pendulum-driven clock for a tower in Magdeburg, Germany.

Apart from his mathematical and mechanical accomplishments, Sylvester II also contributed to the moral renewal of the priesthood, campaigning against concubinage and the selling of ecclesiastical offices, widespread practices among the

clergy in his time. In his view, a priest should set a moral example to his flock.

The atheist philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) wrote that religion “helped in early days to fix the calendar, and it caused Egyptian priests to chronicle eclipses with such care that in time they became able to predict them. These two services [of religion] I am prepared to acknowledge, but I do not know of any others.”

Russell's statement reveals embarrassing (or willful?) ignorance and prejudice. In the narrow field of the measurement of time, where Russell recognizes religion's sole positive achievements, the significance of Sylvester II's invention of the clock is arguably at least as important as that of the priests in ancient Egypt.

Meanwhile, what Pope John Paul II said of his predecessor, the scholar-pope Sylvester II, applies to each of the faith-filled men of science on this list:

[Pope Sylvester II] reminds us that intelligence is a marvelous gift from the Creator. His intellectual and spiritual attitude is a call to the pastors and the faithful of the present age: go in search of the truth; find inner strength in prayer; be concerned for the moral search and serve mankind.

### **2). *Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543)***

Like Leonardo da Vinci, Nicolaus Copernicus was a true Renaissance man, a many-gifted polymath. He was a noted economist, mathematician, physician, Church canon, and diplomat, but he is best

known for his contributions to astronomy. In his famous work *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (“On the Revolutions of Heavenly Spheres”), Copernicus debunked the dominant Ptolemaic model according to which the earth was at the center of our galaxy; instead, Copernicus correctly pointed out that the earth and other planets revolve around the sun.

Copernicus worked as a canon at various churches. His uncle, Lucas Watzenrode the Younger, was the Bishop of Warmia and defended Poland and the Baltics against the Teutonic Order, an order of hospitaller knights founded during the Crusades who routinely violated the Fifth Commandment in converting pagans to Christianity. Copernicus dedicated *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* to Pope Paul III. Jan Matejko’s famous painting *Astronomer Copernicus, or Conversations with God*, beautifully depicts Copernicus’ dual role as a man of faith and science.

### 3). *Galileo Galilei (1564-1642)*

It might seem provocative to add Galileo to this list. After all, the Florentine astronomer was sentenced to house arrest by the Inquisition for insisting on the heliocentric model. Arguably, no other historical event is used to illustrate the alleged incompatibility of science and religion more than his trial.

As Protestantism spread across Europe, Pope Paul III instituted the Roman Inquisition to protect the faithful from error. Paul III himself accepted the Copernican model. However, Jesuit astronomers would convince later popes that it was erroneous. Indeed, science would confirm the heliocentric model only in 1729. In 1616, the Inquisition declared the notions that the sun is at the center of our galaxy and that the earth revolves around it to be “foolish and

absurd” and demanded that Galileo not teach the heliocentric model publicly. The Florentine consented, but he did not keep his promise. Eventually, the Inquisition found him guilty of heresy and sentenced him to spend the rest of his life under house arrest.

To be sure, Galileo’s house arrest was in a gilded cage, as he was allowed to reside in his villa, one of the most opulent in all Florence, with his servants. However, he was unfairly mistreated by the Church for declaring what science would prove true. It was only in 1992 when John Paul II, who on many occasions publicly apologized for the sins of the people of the Church across the centuries, rehabilitated Galileo. (The background and complexity of Galileo’s case is examined in detail in [Galileo Revisited: The Galileo Affair in Context](#) by Dom Paschal Scotti.)

### 4). *André-Marie Ampère (1775-1836)*

The amp, the base unit of electrical current, was named after André-Marie Ampère, one of the fathers of electromagnetism. This French scientist discovered that a wire carrying an electric current can attract or repel another current-carrying wire, thus generating a magnetic field. This paved the way for the later discovery of electromagnetic radiation, which made possible inventions that we now take for granted, including the radio, microwave, and X-rays.

Ampère was a devout Catholic. While studying at the Sorbonne, the scholar Frédéric Ozanam, later beatified, was going through a period of doubt. One day, he wandered into a parish church in a Paris slum where he unexpectedly saw none other than André-Marie Ampère, one of the most famous scientists of the time, on his knees praying.

“Professor, I see you believe in prayer,” Ozanam said.

“Everyone has to pray,” Ampère replied. This was a turning point in Ozanam’s conversion.

### **5). *Louis Braille (1809-1852)***

Fiddling around with tools in his father’s tannery, the three-year-old Louis Braille accidentally stabbed his eye with an awl. This led to an infection, which eventually spread to both eyes and left him completely blind.

Being blind before the invention of the Braille alphabet made learning extremely difficult. Books written for the blind at the time consisted of clumsy, bulky raised letters. Yet Louis Braille excelled in his studies and, at the age of ten, went to Paris to study at one of the world’s first schools for blind children. He wanted to make the alphabet for the blind easier and more accessible, and so he created a system based around raised dots, inspired by a similar secret system of communication used for communication between troops on the front. Braille’s alphabet was mostly completed when he was just fifteen.

A devout Catholic, Braille loved liturgical music and earned his living as an organ player at churches all over France.

### **6). *Gregor Mendel (1822-1884)***

Gregor Mendel was born to a poor peasant family in Heinzendorf bei Odrau, presently Hynčice in the Czech Republic. While Mendel was motivated to join the monastic life in part to escape the grinding poverty of his youth, Father Clemens Richter, OSA, his great-great-grand-nephew and a fellow

Augustinian friar, writes that his famous relative did have a sincere religious faith: Mendel was deeply rooted in his Christian faith, and he passionately tried to convey his conviction and experience to others at any given occasion. Testimony of this attitude is shown in various outlines of sermons that are still preserved.

Initially, Mendel experimented with the principles of heredity on mice. But his prior was disgusted by the notion of studying the copulation of animals, so Mendel switched to pea plants. After many long hours spent on crossbreeding them, Mendel came up with the basic principles of the inheritance of recessive and dominant alleles, which are now illustrated in probably every single high school biology textbook. Later, Mendel would become the prior of his abbey.

Mendel presented a paper on inheritance at a meeting of the National History Society of Brno in 1865, six years after Charles Darwin had published his *On the Origin of Species*. Darwin was aware neither of the paper nor of the notion of genes, yet evolutionary science does not make sense without genetics. Mendel was ignored by the scientific community in his life, and his work gained recognition only sixteen years after his death.

### **7). *Louis Pasteur (1822-1895)***

Very few nineteenth-century scientists left such a lasting impact on our world as Louis Pasteur. He is considered the inventor of vaccines (such as for rabies), which in the twentieth century would prove critical in eliminating many other diseases. Thanks to the polio vaccine, for instance, poliomyelitis is all but obsolete except for in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Pasteur also discovered pasteurization, the process by which germs are eliminated from food and can therefore be preserved for longer. He is one of the discoverers of germ theory of disease, by which physicians understand the mechanisms of the contraction of maladies.

According to an oft-told story (I recall hearing it during a priest's sermon at one Mass years ago), Pasteur was praying the rosary on the train one day. His neighbor in the compartment, unaware of his interlocutor's identity, criticized the old man for believing such superstition and said he would like to mail him some books disproving the existence of God. Pasteur told the youth to send him these materials to his address and pulled a business card out of his coat pocket. The young man was stunned that he had arrogantly lectured one of the true greats of science. Epic fail.

I do not know if this story is authentic or apocryphal, but it illustrates Louis Pasteur's ardent faith well.

#### **8). *Guglielmo Marconi (1874-1937)***

Guglielmo Marconi, the inventor of the radio and the winner of the 1909 Nobel Prize in Physics, was born to an Italian aristocrat and his Irish Protestant wife. Although baptized a Catholic, he had been raised an Anglican; he received the sacrament of confirmation in the Catholic Church so he could marry his wife, Maria Cristina Bezzi-Scali. It was then that he became a zealous Catholic.

Another Catholic played a key role in Marconi's invention of the radio: Thomas Edison informed Marconi of the experiments of Father Jozef Murgaš, a Slovak priest living in Pennsylvania, who

contributed to the wireless transmission of the human voice.

In 1931, Marconi set up Vatican Radio for Pope Pius XI; this was the first radio station that was used to preach the Good News. One year later, he invented a short-wave radio telephone to facilitate communications between the Vatican and the papal summer residence at Castel Gandolfo, an early predecessor to the cellular phone.

Unfortunately, there is a dark side to Marconi. He was a member of the Fascist Party, and growing evidence suggests he supported Mussolini's anti-Jewish policies. Yet despite these obvious flaws, Marconi was a perfect example of a scientist who used his discovery for the good of the Church.

#### **9) *Georges Lemaître (1894-1966)***

A few years ago, I was strolling through a park and overheard two teenaged girls talking. "I'm not sure if I believe in God or the Big Bang," one said to the other.

I regret not interrupting their conversation and pointing out that the Big Bang theory had been formulated by Georges Lemaître, a Catholic priest from Belgium and professor of physics at the Catholic University of Louvain.

Before Lemaître, not all physicists believed the universe had a definite beginning. However, he argued that it had expanded from a "primeval atom." While the notion of a specific point marking the beginning of existence was consistent with the account of Creation proposed by Judaism and Christianity, Lemaître believed that the Big Bang theory contradicted neither theism nor atheism.

Lemaître applied Albert Einstein's theory of general relativity to cosmology. The priest was among the first scientists to propose that the universe is expanding, a view initially rejected by Einstein himself; he was nominated for the Nobel Prizes in Physics and Chemistry. In 1960, Pope John XXIII gave him the honorary title of Monsignor.

### ***10) Jérôme Lejeune (1926-1994)***

In today's West, there is a growing inconsistent tendency to, on the one hand, promote the greater inclusion and empowerment of people with physical and intellectual disabilities but, on the other, to lobby for their widespread killing in the womb. In Iceland, for example, [nearly 100 percent](#) of unborn children diagnosed with Down syndrome during neonatal testing are aborted.

The French geneticist and pediatrician [Jérôme Lejeune](#) compassionately worked with children with disabilities. In 1958, he discovered that Down syndrome is caused by an extra copy of chromosome 21. Previously, scientists had believed that Down syndrome was caused by syphilis,

Filip Mazurczak

<https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2022/07/21/ten-catholic-scientists-and-inventors/>

alcohol abuse by the mother, or genes of Asian origin (hence the now-archaic terms "Mongolism" and "Mongoloid").

In the 1960s and 1970s, Lejeune vocally opposed the legalization of abortion in France and many other Western countries. He wrote: "One cannot protect another from misfortune by committing a crime. And killing a child is murder. You cannot bring relief to one person by killing another." Lejeune bitterly (but accurately) noted that his pro-life advocacy would prevent him from winning the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

Lejeune was a long-time friend of Pope John Paul II, who as the Archbishop of Krakow invited him to give lectures. During his 1997 visit to France for World Youth Day, the Polish pope prayed at the French scientist's tomb.

Currently, Lejeune's cause for beatification has advanced. Last year, Pope Francis declared him Venerable, meaning that he will be officially recognized as blessed once a miracle through his intercession is approved.

## World Record In Oregon: With God, Anything Is Possible!

*Sydney McLaughlin adds a message of praise  
to her astonishing world record recently set in Oregon.*

At 22 years old, Sydney McLaughlin is undeniably queen of the [World Athletics Championships](#) being held in Oregon. She won the 400 meter hurdles with a spectacular time of just 50'68" – reaching the limits of what is humanly possible. But the best part is her story. She's a woman of faith who knows who is really responsible for her achievement.

This is the post she left on Instagram, right after setting a new record:

“So let us come BOLDLY to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive His mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.” – Hebrews 4:16 Praise. His. Name.

What a beautiful day yesterday was. Preparing for this meet, the core of my team was centered around faith and belief. The amount of prayer coupled with hard work was divinely culminated in 50.68 seconds. By the grace of God, we accomplished our goal. Thank you so much to my coach, my husband, my team, my family, and all of my supporters. Let's continue pushing the bounds of the sport, because with God, all things are possible! God bless.

*A Christian Witness*

Alvaro Real

<https://aleteia.org/2022/07/24/world-record-in-oregon-with-god-anything-is-possible/>

This kind of post is nothing new for McLaughlin. The whole athletics world knows her strong religious convictions. She shows them every time she gets a medal, every time she sets a world record.

McLaughlin's family is Christian and her parents raised her in a household of faith. She graduated from Union Catholic Regional High School, where the values of compassion, community, honesty, respect and responsibility came to take first place in her life.

During a ceremony at Union Catholic celebrating McLaughlin's Olympic gold, [she told the assembled crowd](#), “Over the past year of my life, I realized that success is not measured by the amount of money, medals or followers that you may have, true fulfillment comes from obedience to God.” Among all those who rejoiced in her recent victory was a religious sister, Sister Percylee Hart, the principal of Union Catholic.

That humility that drives McLaughlin, upon breaking a world record, to remember God and give thanks, is truly admirable. She has turned her message of victory on social media into a prayer of praise.

## Transforming Ancient Catechesis And Pedagogy With 21st-Century Technology

*Dr. Tim Gray of The Augustine Institute talks about the new Word of Life religious education curriculum, which uses an integrated approach to catechesis in the full spirit of the New Evangelization.*

The Augustine Institute and Ignatius Press are collaborating on developing a brand new religious education curriculum for preschool through 8th grade, called [Word of Life](#). “An authentic catechetical renewal,” the Word of Life website explains, “requires new catechetical models that help children, teachers, parents, and families discover their authentic Catholic identity to reinvigorate fruitful participation in the Church’s life and mission.” Word of Life meets this need with an integrated approach to catechesis in the full spirit of the New Evangelization.

Tim Gray is [President of the Augustine Institute](#). Under his leadership, the Augustine Institute has created popular study programs such as [Symbolon](#) (a comprehensive [program](#) of faith formation for adults), [FORMED](#) (a digital platform with Catholic films, ebooks, audio talks, and more), and [Signs of Grace](#) (a sacramental preparation program for children). He is also the author of several books, including [Peter: Keys to Following Jesus](#) (Ignatius Press, 2016), host of many video series produced by the Augustine Institute, and much more.

Dr. Gray recently spoke with CWR about the important role of catechesis in the life of the Church, and how Word of Life can transform the catechetical landscape.

Catholic World Report: You used to be a diocesan religious education director. Could you tell me a bit about that and kind of your personal catechetical experience and how that prepared you for establishing the Augustine Institute?

**Dr. Tim Gray:** Back in 1993 through 1995, I worked for then Bishop Charles Chaput as the Director of Religious Education for Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Rapid City, South Dakota. And that was a great joy. And one of the first things we had to do is review the curriculum, kindergarten through high school.

As I surveyed the field of what was out there, I realized there were very few curricula that cared deeply about content. And the ones that did had some great content, but they were less refined and capable in terms of the pedagogy and the teacher manuals and making it easy for teachers to use. And so I realized that a lot of my teachers — 85% of them — didn’t care whether it was conservative or liberal. They just wanted something that was going to be user-friendly.

And so, at that point, I said we’ve got to provide things that both have excellence in content, but also excellence in pedagogy and teacher-friendly training manuals. I saw the need in the market and made a resolution that someday I would love to change that. The dream is finally fulfilled here with Word of Life, where we could finally create a curriculum that meets both those standards.

**CWR:** Some further background: can you talk briefly about the founding of the Augustine Institute, and the merger with Lighthouse Catholic Media?

**Gray:** Going back to 1993 when I worked for Chaput, one of the first things I did for him is lead the youth of Rapid City down to Denver for World Youth Day. And that was very inspiring. From that inspiration of encountering John Paul here in Denver on World Youth Day, the seeds were sown for starting a graduate school that would serve the new evangelization and to answer John Paul's summons for a new evangelization. That was really the beginning of the seeds of the graduate school, and we started it in 2005 here in Denver, and it's been a tremendous blessing and the Lord's made it grow.

One of our core values is collaboration. We began collaborating with Lighthouse Catholic Media because Fr. Joseph Fessio introduced Mark Middendorf and myself, and they started to distribute our new video series we did called Symbolon and that went really well. Then I shared that I had a plan for a digital platform called FORMED, and Lighthouse was going to help distribute that. And we got a partnership in collaboration with Ignatius Press and the Augustine Institute and Lighthouse. Then we were collaborating so closely with Lighthouse that Mark and I decided we could probably be more efficient, effective, and reach more souls for Christ if we did a merger. We merged Lighthouse and the Augustine Institute, I think, in 2015.

**CWR:** The Augustine Institute is involved in catechist formation and certification. What role does it play with Word of Life?

**Gray:** The Augustine Institute now has over 550 active students in its M.A. program. As we've grown, we're training people who are working in Catholic schools and parishes and are doing the work of catechesis in evangelization. We know from our students and our alumni the need for better tools in

the field. And that was one inspiration for us to embark on this curriculum project with Word of Life, and hearing from our alumni and students and wanting to give them good tools to be effective in their mission. That was really informative to this curriculum and this project.

**CWR:** Was Signs of Grace the Augustine Institute's first foray into the world of elementary catechism, catechetical publishing?

**Gray:** As we were doing more and more sacramental prep for parishes — such as [Reborn](#) and [Presence](#) and [Forgiven](#) — we heard from all the parishes that our videos were so great, our pedagogy was so powerful. There needed to be something better for sacramental prep, for First Communion, first confession. That was the impetus for us to create Signs of Grace. Then we launched Signs of Grace and that was really the seeds for Word of Life, because a lot of the pedagogy that we developed for Word of Life came out of our experience with Signs of Grace.

There was a biblical thread through every chapter. There was also the life of the Church, and the Saints, and Church history that was woven throughout. Then we had Paul McCusker doing great storytelling for a modern day kids called the Nick and Sam Adventures. That way your kids could hear contemporary kids who are engaging with the faith, as well as the biblical stories and the stories of the saints in the church. It was really, really popular; the videos were very popular. The workbooks were beautiful, and we really focused on making it, from what I learned in Rapid City, effective pedagogy for the teachers. We really focused on the importance of good teacher books and teacher manuals to help the teachers.

**CWR:** One of the Augustine Institute's greatest strengths is adult faith formation: you mentioned FORMED, Forgiven, Presence, the [Lectio Series](#). Why is it important for adults to continue their own formation?

**Gray:** We're called by Christ to love God with all of our heart and all of our mind. And so it's so important for adults to continue to learn about their faith, because that feeds their prayer life. It is their imagination and it feeds their spiritual life. The more the Catholics do that, the stronger their spiritual life grows. One of the great assets we have for Word of Life is we really link up our content for an adult faith formation for the parents that links back to the FORMED platform.

Not only do we have a plethora of content for adults on FORMED, but we also have a lot of children's content. That then becomes a great resource for the teachers to find supplemental materials to enrich the faith formation of the children in the curriculum K-8, whether it's a Saint movie or a documentary on Divine Mercy. There's a lot of great resources there and children's content for the kids.

**CWR:** What do you hope will come from the publication of Word of Life?

Paul Senz

<https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2022/07/26/using-21st-century-technology-to-transform-ancient-catechesis-and-pedagogy/>

**Gray:** I've got two great aspirations for this new Word of Life curriculum.

One is to really transform catechesis in the parish and school by providing a curriculum that has incredible pedagogy, great content, but also videos that are woven throughout the curriculum and designed for the curriculum. And that'll be the first video series approved by the USCCB for catechesis.

Secondly, it has a great digital platform that serves both the students, the teachers uniquely and the parents. And that will be the first time a curriculum has a platform that really serves all three of those groups in a unique way. I think what we're trying to do is bring 21st century technology to transform ancient catechesis and pedagogy. That's what I think is really promising and exciting.

The final note is that we created a parallel curriculum for the parents. We find that it's not enough to evangelize and catechize the children; we have to reach their parents and families. This is going to aim to do that; it's exciting because we've already seen the fruits of that with Signs of Grace, with lots of parents converting and getting reignited in their faith. And if we can do that across the board, it will transform parishes and schools.

## Federal Court Upholds Catholic School's Right To Dismiss Employee

Roncalli High School in Indianapolis did not have to employ counselor in same-sex relationship.

federal court in Chicago Thursday ruled that a Catholic high school does not have to employ a woman in a same-sex relationship.

The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago upheld a lower court ruling that said that Roncalli High School in Indianapolis had the right to dismiss the woman, who had worked at the school for 40 years. The lower court cited a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that said there is a "ministerial exception" to non-discrimination requirements.

Lynn Starkey, who was a guidance counselor at Roncalli, first sued the school and the Archdiocese of Indianapolis in 2019, a year after the school declined to renew her contract because she had entered into a "marriage" with another woman.

### *Upholding Religious Liberty*

"The court ruled that the lawsuit must be dismissed, because the Constitution forbids the government from interfering with a

John Burger

<https://aleteia.org/2022/07/29/federal-court-upholds-catholic-schools-right-to-dismiss-employee>

religious school's selection of who will pass on the faith to students," said a statement from Becket, a [religious liberty](#) law firm that represented the school and archdiocese.

"Religious groups have a constitutional right to hire individuals who believe in their faith's ideals and are committed to their religious mission," said Luke Goodrich, vice president and senior counsel at Becket. "Our justice system has consistently ruled that the government cannot intrude on a religious organization's choice of who will pass on the faith to the next generation."

Both courts cited two Supreme Court cases, *Hosanna-Tabor Lutheran Evangelical School v. EEOC* and *Our Lady of Guadalupe School v. Morrissey-Berru*, which recognized the right of religious organizations to choose who will carry out their religious responsibilities.

"Catholic schools are tasked by the Church to uphold the dignity of every human person and teach the fullness of the Catholic faith," said Goodrich. "The Seventh Circuit's decision ensures that religious schools can remain faithful to their mission."

## The Papal Push To Keep Latin Alive

*The Latin language is assuredly worthy of being defended with great care instead of being scorned; for the Latin Church it is the most abundant source of Christian civilization and the richest treasury of piety. We must not hold in low esteem these traditions of our fathers which were our glory for centuries.*

—Pope Paul VI

Especially now, most lay American Catholics regard with indifference if not suspicion the idea of teaching Latin in school. Did not Vatican II—and now Traditionis Custodes—make clear that Latin is obsolete and that an undue interest in it is a sign of pathological nostalgia? Why waste time making Catholic students study Latin when they could be mastering finance, doing social work, or cramming for standardized tests? Or so the conventional wisdom seems to go.

Yet this pervasive disdain for Latin is not merely ironic but surreal, especially insofar as it is couched in deference to Church authority. Setting aside for a moment the decades of debate swirling around the Latin Mass, it would be difficult to overstate the fervor with which “modern” popes have commended—or even commanded—the promotion of the Latin language.

In *Veterum Sapientia*, for instance, John XXIII himself begins his affirmation of classical languages with an extended and eloquent defense of the Western tradition. “The Wisdom of the Ancients, contained within the writings of the Greeks and Romans, as well as the most illustrious monuments of the learning of those ancient peoples, must be considered to be a sort of dawn which lights the way for the Truth of the Gospel,” the pope explains. Since the Fathers and Doctors of the Church “discerned in the most excellent of the literary monuments of those ancient times a certain preparatory program for souls,” John

XXIII continues, we today must concede that the Greco-Roman legacy is of paramount importance, even if much of it is pagan, for “in the established order of Christian affairs, nothing indeed has perished—nothing true, nothing just, nothing noble, nor anything beautiful—which prior ages had brought forth.”

To be sure, the preceding could just as easily lead to an exhortation to read Plato and Virgil in translation, along with translations of the Church Fathers. (And indeed, such a Great Books program alone would represent a vast improvement over what is currently offered at most Catholic institutions.) But in context, it is clear that John XXIII had something more in mind, for he goes on to observe that “the Holy Church has cultivated and kept in highest honor the source texts of this wisdom, and especially the Greek and Latin languages, as if they were a sort of golden robe clothing Wisdom itself.” Hence, “the Apostolic See has in every age taken zealous care to preserve the Latin language.”

In short, Pope John XXIII emphatically concurs with his predecessors, who “have not only, often and vigorously, held up the importance and excellence of the Latin language as objects of praise,” but also urgently gave “warning of the dangers attendant on its neglect.” Latin is critical not only as a repository of memory and insight, but also as a bridge for international understanding, one which may elevate all men’s thoughts through its elegance:

[T]he Latin language is most suitable for furthering every kind of cultural initiative among all sorts of peoples, since it does not incite jealousy, but is equally accessible to every race of men. It is not partisan, but rather, favorable and welcoming to all. Nor would it be right not to mention that there exists in the Latin language an innate, noble harmoniousness and propriety—“a way of speaking which is dense with meaning, rich, and abundant, full of majesty and dignity.” It has qualities within it which are uniquely conducive both to clarity and to seriousness.

As *Veterum Sapientia* is a substantial document, much more could be drawn from it, but it is worth emphasizing that John XXIII was hardly alone among recent popes. John Paul II likewise noted that “Latin is in a way a universal language cutting across national boundaries,” before going on to make clear why Latin is not merely a quirky hobby of pedants and aesthetes but rather the sacred responsibility of scholars, professors, and teachers. All such persons need some direct contact with the Latin writers of the ancient world, from Livy to St. Ambrose, and “one ought not to be considered a master of learning who does not understand the language of these writers,” stated John Paul II plainly. He even went so far as to quote the philosopher Cicero: “It is not[...]so great a distinction to know Latin as it is a disgrace not to know it.”

Of all the modern popes, Paul VI is probably the least popular in “traditionalist” circles, even as he is often celebrated among liberals as the harbinger of the radical changes of the 1960s. This reputation as the man who inaugurated “the spirit of Vatican II” is precisely what makes Paul’s repeated and unambiguous testimony so interesting. In the apostolic letter *Sacrificium Laudis*, exhorting religious orders to preserve the

Latin Office, Paul noted that some influential voices had called for marginalizing Latin and that “some even insist that Latin should be wholly suppressed.”

The pope was “disturbed and saddened by these requests,” and he explained why: “What is in question here,” he wrote, “is not only the retention within the choral office of the Latin language, though it is of course right that this should be eagerly guarded and should certainly not be lightly esteemed. For this language is, within the Latin Church, an abundant well-spring of Christian civilization, and a very rich treasure-trove of devotion.”

No doubt devotees of the Latin Mass may note how Paul VI takes for granted the importance of a Latin presence in the liturgy, and that is a fair point. But the more subtle point made here by Paul VI is that Latin liturgy has always been embedded in a Latin heritage, in a culture of the classics. As interesting and in some respects meritorious as Scandinavian, sub-Saharan African, or Mayan language and culture may be, the fact is that the Word became incarnate in the province of Palestine, in the Roman empire, following the Hellenization of the Mediterranean—which means that Christians must have a special regard for Latin, along with Hebrew and Greek.

And no disrespect to those latter two indispensable tongues is meant when we add that, for historical reasons, Latin acquired an additional importance as the language which defined Western Christendom for centuries. If more and more Catholics find it hard to understand and identify with their predecessors, perhaps that is because we are no longer all speaking the same language—the language of the Church.

Aside from the occasional honorable dissident institutions, such as Christendom or Thomas More College, few Catholic colleges even offer Latin, much less require it. As for Catholic high schools, this writer's impression is that such institutions are far more likely to offer Spanish or Chinese—the languages of post-America's new underclass and overlords, respectively.

Nor is there any use pretending that the remarks of John XXIII, Paul VI, and John

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<https://www.crisismagazine.com/2022/the-papal-push-to-keep-latin-alive>

Paul II apply only to seminaries. It is risible to pretend that a Latin-fluent elite of priests and theologians can emerge from an amnesiac culture which has scrapped the apparatus for teaching the language. If we now have a problem with pervasive infidelity regarding Church doctrine, it may be because we tolerated long-standing infidelity in schools and universities which did not obey the repeated Vatican direction to cherish Latin.

## Biden's New Title IX Rules Deputize Teachers To Override Parents On Gender Identity

Team [Biden's proposed new Title IX regulations](#) make it clear:  
*They're coming for your children.*

The administration ostensibly drafted the rules to protect gay and transgender students from bullying and harassment, but they do nothing of the sort. In reality, President Biden is handing teachers a weapon to subvert parental prerogatives.

Title IX is a simple statute that outlaws “sex discrimination” in education. It says nothing about “gender” or “gender identity.” But the Biden administration wants to put its own spin on the law and redefine “sex” to [include these categories](#).

This change has far-reaching implications. One is that it will be used to keep parents in the dark on everything from curricular material to the fact that a child is socially transitioning at school. Because this new Title IX frames gender ideology as an anti-discrimination issue, schools won't have to seek parental permission for children to participate in lessons on choosing and changing one's sex. Indeed, schools will very likely use Title IX's anti-discrimination mandate to justify denying parental opt-outs from these controversial lessons.

The rules will also grant children an absolute right to use school facilities and participate in activities “consistent with their gender identity,” regardless of whether their parents agree or are even aware of said identity.

A mother in Washington state, for example, told me school officials asked her 11-year-old daughter if she wanted to stay in the boys' cabin on an upcoming field trip

without talking to the mother first. The regulations will give legal backing for such actions all across the country.

In many places, schools are already claiming legal authority to socially transition children without parental consent or knowledge. In Alaska, one school used Title IX as a justification for changing a child's name and pronouns [without telling her mother](#). Officials then revised every single school document, other than those sent to the parents, to reflect the child's chosen male name. That name even appeared in the yearbook. When the mother found out and protested, school officials said she had no say over the matter — because of Title IX.

Perhaps most alarming is the way in which officials might use the rules to threaten parents who don't affirm their child's chosen identity. Because the regulations claim to apply to conduct that occurs “outside [the school's] education program or activity or outside the United States,” schools might get the impression they can label parental conduct at home “discriminatory.”

A parent who refuses to use a child's preferred pronouns, declines to fill a prescription for puberty blockers or decides against sending a gender-confused child to an affirming therapist thus is “discriminating” against his or her child. What is a teacher or Title IX coordinator to do in such a circumstance?

It's easy to see how school employees might believe they're even required to report such

parents to social services. The rules say schools must “respond to a hostile environment based on sex.” Biden’s broadly written Title IX rules give the government a good-faith basis to investigate parents for creating a harmful environment for their child.

This is already happening to families around the country. A California father recently told me that his daughter’s school filed a report with Child Protective Services after officials found out he and his wife weren’t referring to their daughter by her preferred male name.

A CPS agent showed up to the school that same day and informed the parents that she’d be removing their daughter from their

custody, accusing them of subjecting their daughter to “emotional damage.” It took the father about a month to get his daughter back, and she was returned only after he signed a CPS waiver vowing to use her male name moving forward.

Biden’s proposal is an invasive use of federal power to deputize teachers and school administrators to override parental decision-making. And while some states have passed laws to protect parental prerogatives, the administration will claim that its federal rules take precedence.

It may be up to the courts to decide the limits of Title IX. In the meantime, we’re likely to hear even more heartbreaking stories of schools usurping parents who want the best for their kids.

Kaylee McGhee White

<https://nypost.com/2022/08/15/bidens-title-ix-rules-deputize-teachers-to-override-parents/>

## Doctor Says Boston Gender Clinic Mutilates And Sterilizes Children

Controversy erupted last week when news of Boston Children’s Hospital’s Gender Clinic for kids took over social media, prompting outrage over the hospital’s “first of its kind” program to facilitate sex-changes for children in the form of hormone treatments and irreversible surgeries.

According to the hospital’s website, Boston Children’s [Center for Gender Surgery](#) offers a “full suite of treatment options” for children and teens to “transfer seamlessly” into transition surgeries, including double mastectomies for children as young as 15 and sterilizing genital surgeries for teens. [The program](#) has seen over 1,000 patients, as young as 3 years old.

Pediatricians are condemning the program, which comes on the heels of news that youth gender clinics around the world are closing and changing guidance due to evidence that transition procedures harm, rather than help, children with gender dysphoria.

Dr. Michelle Cretella, a Catholic pediatrician and a member of the Catholic Medical Association (CMA), the largest association of Catholic physicians across the U.S., condemned Boston’s gender program in a statement to CNA.

“These surgeries do not treat mental illness nor prevent suicide,” Cretella said in a statement, “[but] they do mutilate and permanently sterilize children who have no capacity to assess let alone consent to such life-changing interventions.”

The procedures Boston Children’s Hospital conducts on transgender children and teens include breast augmentation, chest reconstruction, “facial harmonization,” a surgical procedure that modifies the face to

appear more feminine or masculine, and surgical techniques to raise or lower a child’s voice to match how they identify.

The hospital also performs genital surgeries that are known to carry a high risk of complications for teens.

Boston’s [initial](#) guidance said these surgeries could be performed on minors 17 years of age, then updated its guidance to say 18, after the story broke.

These include [metoidioplasty](#) and [phalloplasty](#) – the surgical creation of a penis using existing genital tissue or flaps of skin – and [vaginoplasty](#), the surgical creation of a vagina.

These procedures are described by surgeons and physicians at Boston Children’s Hospital in a series of [YouTube videos](#) that the hospital put out to market the procedures they offer.

Phalloplasty, as the hospital [describes](#), is a 12-hour surgery conducted on girls seeking to transition into boys. A girl who undergoes phalloplasty must first have a [hysterectomy](#). Then skin is “harvested” to construct a penis from another place on her body, such as the thigh or forearm. The “vagina may also be removed” and the surgeon grafts the new “penis” into place. On average, it takes a patient 12 to 18 months to heal from a phalloplasty.

Likewise, [vaginoplasty](#) is performed on boys seeking to transition into girls, which requires inverting the penis into a vagina which Boston Children’s acknowledges requires a significant recovery time and a “lifetime” of upkeep. Boys who undergo

vaginoplasties initially have to use a catheter to urinate, the webpage [states](#), and will need to dilate their “vagina multiple times a day to keep it open,” for the rest of their life.

Cretella describes these surgeries as “horrors.”

“It is only a matter of time before the physicians who perform these mutilating surgeries on children, and the hospitals that employ them, are bombarded by patient and whistleblower lawsuits. This is ultimately what shined a light on the horrors of Tavistock and led to its being shut down,” she said.

The Tavistock clinic in the UK was closed as a result of an independent review earlier this year, after complaints made by whistleblowers, patients, and their families – including 25-year-old [Keira Bell](#), who brought a high court case against the clinic for prescribing her cross-sex hormones and facilitating her sex-transition.

Eddie Heipel

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/252042/doctor-says-boston-gender-clinic-mutilates-and-sterilizes-children>

"It is ironic that Boston Children's Hospital's announcement should come about now. Just 2 weeks ago Tavistock Clinic in the UK, the world's largest children's gender clinic, was shut down due to risk of harm from transgender interventions," she added.

When CNA reached out to Tavistock, a representative said the clinic was not yet aware of Boston Hospital's new program and therefore had no comment, but explained that Tavistock clinic was shutting down because there was a need for a new model of gender care that is more “holistic.”

A public relations representative from Boston Children's Hospital repeatedly told CNA over the phone that the hospital had “no comment” on its gender program, “no comment” to critics who highlight the dangers of surgical sex-changes on children, and “no comment” about Tavistock closing.

## **Dems Poised To Pull Free Lunches From Christian School That Refuses To Obey LGBT Mandates**

The Biden administration is poised to deny free school lunch funding from a Florida Christian school that refuses to comply with the administration's LGBT mandates, despite the school's qualification for a religious exemption.

Grant Park Christian Academy in Tampa, Fla., represented by Alliance Defending Freedom, is [suing](#) President Joe Biden and Florida agriculture commissioner Nikki Fried for enforcing the Biden administration requirement that schools comply with its LGBT mandates or lose federal school lunch funding.

In May, the Biden administration redefined the meaning of "sex" in Title IX to include sexual orientation and gender identity, [forcing schools](#) to permit transgender students to use male or female bathrooms and play sports with either sex in order to receive National School Lunch Program funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. More than half of state attorneys general rejected the memorandum, with Florida attorney general Ashley Moody

Elizabeth Troutman

<https://freebeacon.com/biden-administration/lunch-money-thief-dems-poised-to-pull-free-lunches-from-christian-school-that-refuses-to-obey-lgbt-mandates/>

saying the Biden administration was "using hungry children to advance a political agenda," the Washington Free Beacon [reported](#).

The Florida school refused to substitute gender identity for biological sex, costing them their ability to feed two meals and snacks daily to their 56 students when the fall semester starts. If Grant Park's application is not approved by Aug. 10, the school will not be reimbursed for the meals it serves students. ADF legal counsel Erica Steinmiller-Perdomo said Fried should not block Grant Park's school lunch funding, as Title IX provides a religious exemption.

"For five years, this Christian school has received funding to provide nutritious meals to dozens of low-income children in the community," Steinmiller-Perdomo said. "Commissioner Fried and the Biden administration are trying to rewrite the law and ignore the exemption in an attempt to force this school to choose between violating its religious beliefs or providing lunches to children."

## 6 Worthy Reasons Why Every School Should Implement Uniforms

*See if you agree with these arguments from someone who wore one for over a decade!*

As a new school year beckons, kids everywhere will be readying themselves for the classroom. In addition to buying school supplies, parents will be trying to find their children the perfect school attire — which is a lot easier said than done. But I have the perfect solution: the school uniform.

I know, I know, I'm treading in dangerous waters here. It's a bone of contention among many parents and children alike. However, I think I have a few solid arguments based on personal experience (although I'm always open to persuasion if you want to share your thoughts in the comments!).

Before I start I should point out that I'm British, and I appreciate that there are a few cultural differences with my brothers and sisters across the pond.

### 1. NO PEER PRESSURE

This is an obvious point often cited by the pro-uniform camp, but I think it's worth reiterating. I wore a uniform from the age of 5 to the age of 16. Often gray — a color I hate — and always with a shirt, pleated skirt, pullover, tie and a blazer. I also had to wear lace up shoes in a particular style. Slightly hardcore? Well, I loved it, and so did my mom, who had seven other kids to clothe.

We never had a lot of money to spend on the latest brands. And even if we had, my parents would not have encouraged us to indulge in them. So our uniforms were a bit of a godsend. We went to school every morning and there were no questions asked. There was always a familiar sea of kids bobbing along, dressed identically.

I appreciate that children feel peer pressure in numerous ways, but taking school clothes out of the equation is always helpful.

### 2. SAVES MONEY

Again, this argument is often raised with varying opinions. But in England, public schools are encouraged to have uniforms that come at a minimum cost to families. There is also help given to low income families in certain circumstances.

So, for example, in the summer many schools require girls to wear a gingham summer dress that can be bought for about \$7. These dresses are worn for a good three months, and five days a week. That's certainly not bad. And often these clothes are passed down to younger siblings.

### 3. SAVES TIME

You know all those arguments that kids have when they don't want to wear a certain item of clothing? Well, with a school uniform there is no choice! For five days a week our kids know what they're wearing, their clothes can be prepared easily, and time is saved!

### 4. CREATES A SENSE OF IDENTITY

I went to [Catholic state schools](#) throughout my education, which are state-funded religious school — including two St. Josephs and Blessed Edward Oldcorne, a martyr who died a gruesome death. On each of my uniforms there was always the school crest. While I don't remember the earlier ones, I vividly remember that last one with those familiar initials A.D.M.G., Ad

Majorem Dei Gloriam (the only Latin I remember), or For the Greater Glory of God.

Our crest was on our tie, pullover, blazer, and schoolbag. While out and about you could not hide which school you attended — a point that was used to ensure we behaved outside of the school walls. It garnered a sense of belonging and a sense of pride in our school, and in our education. We were our own little community.

## **5. PREPARES THEM FOR THE FUTURE**

One thing about wearing a tie for years is that you know how to knot one very quickly. That's certainly a skill for those who may have to wear one in the workplace. Yet, aside from the tie, the school uniform encourages us to dress for a certain purpose. When kids put on a uniform they know what is expected of them.

The classical uniform isn't exactly comfortable and doesn't allow you to sit back and relax. This sort of echoes the workplace where often people need to wear at least a suit, if not a tie. It reminds me of what my dad would say when discussing the importance of appearance: "Dress for the job you want, not what you have."

And perhaps after COVID, where people really embraced loungewear and sneakers, a little more formal wear would be a welcome comeback. Again, I imagine, people will say that you don't have to be dressed smartly to

perform well. This is true; after all, look at billionaires such as Mark Zuckerberg.

However, I think for impressionable young minds, uniforms allow them to stay more focused.

## **6. ENCOURAGES THEM TO FOLLOW RULES**

Again, this is slightly contentious, but I feel it is important. The one thing about uniforms in England is that there are often strict penalties applied if pupils don't conform. So, if skirts get rolled up too high, teachers will be there to remind kids to lower them. In fact, [if a skirt, or even a haircut, is too short, children may be sent home.](#)

This may sound a little strict, but the policies are in place to help kids respect the school rules and to encourage pupils to respect themselves and their appearance. And in response to those who question a child's ability to express themselves ... I've often heard that children should be encouraged to express their personalities through their clothing, and a uniform restricts their self-expression. Pardon me for sounding British here, but I say that's a load of poppycock!

Our self-identity is much more than the clothes we wear, and uniforms are only for school hours. Kids still have plenty of time outside of the classroom to wear what they want. Our children have a myriad of ways to express themselves and their personalities, and that's something parents should encourage.

Cerith Gardiner

<https://aleteia.org/2022/08/16/6-worthy-reasons-why-every-school-should-implement-uniforms>

## Start The New School Year With Pro-Life Education

*If we—as parents and educators—do nothing to help the children in our lives grow in their faith and learn to care for and protect the vulnerable, the sick, the elderly, and the preborn, evil will prevail.*

Judie Brown, president of American Life League, is not just passionate about protecting preborn babies, the sick, and the vulnerable. She's passionate about teaching the importance of protecting preborn babies, the sick, and the vulnerable. She understands that, in order to build a culture of life, we must teach respect and dignity for all people—born and preborn. And the best time to start teaching this is when people are young. When children grow up with this foundation and the understanding that all human beings have value, they will be more likely to treat them with love and respect.

That was her vision for the [Culture of Life Studies Program](#)—American Life League's pro-life educational program for students preschool aged through high school. And in 2014, under Judie's guidance, a group of educators and homeschool moms began creating lessons that range from one-day lessons on [saints](#) to four-day lessons on [euthanasia](#), the [sanctity of marriage](#), and the [preborn baby](#) to four-week picture book lessons about [caring for and protecting others](#), and more!

Over the years, as the program has evolved, we have seen tremendous growth. These lessons are used throughout the country in Catholic schools, by homeschoolers, in religious education programs, and in youth groups.

We recently received a message from Rosemary Circo, a middle school teacher in California who uses many of the CLSP lessons. She wrote to say how much her students enjoyed the lesson on [St.](#)

[Maximilian Kolbe](#). She stated: “My students loved his lesson and the project. They made their own radio commercials about St. Max's life using Flipgrid. A genius lesson.” She followed this up by saying that she recently created a library system for the school so that all teachers have access to our resources. We are thrilled that the students at St. Bruno Catholic School are learning the importance of protecting all human beings.

As the new school year begins, we want to introduce more people to our program and explain how easy it is to integrate CLSP lessons into any curriculum—be it in a school, a homeschool, a religious ed program, or a youth group.

The Culture of Life Studies Program is unique, as it's the only Catholic “culture of life” [educational program](#) to:

- Provide pre-k through high school lessons and unit studies for implementation in multiple learning environments. Every study includes practical applications of the ideas and truths taught, helping both students and educators to become effective communicators of the culture of life.
- Utilize subject-matter experts (doctors, lawyers, scientists, teachers, and religious clergy) and some of the greatest pro-life minds in the world to help create solid materials that inspire and motivate students to both live and promote the culture of life—all while protecting the innocence of our audience.

- Create materials that can be easily integrated into religion, history, science, literature, government, art, music, and other classes.
- Delve deep into subject matters and into the lives of historical figures paramount to both understanding and defeating the culture of death.
- Pair the philosophical foundations of the pro-life position with real-world, hands-on applications for students by providing them with the tools necessary to articulate the message, defend the position, and live out the culture of life in every aspect of their daily lives.

All of our lessons are age appropriate and adhere to Catholic teaching. Many even have a nihil obstat and an imprimatur.

Pro-life education is more important now than ever. Why?

Take a look at the state of our country. The culture of death has gotten a stranglehold on politics, in schools, on social media, and on TV. Everywhere we turn, we see a rejection of morality, a disdain for faith, and an attempt to be “woke.”

One particularly egregious example comes from Florida where Sarasota school board member Tom Edwards [said at a recent meeting](#): “I just wanted to give a little reassurance that here in the state of Florida there are school board members that are woke. We’re here. . . . You need to know we

Susan Ciancio

<https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2022/08/16/start-the-new-school-year-with-pro-life-education/>

have your backs. And we’re working in the best strategic spot because we’re on the inside. We’re working from the inside.” He goes on to say that he’s not the only one.

Indeed, he is not the only one. This is why we must protect our children. And this is why they need pro-life lessons that teach the truths of our faith, that help them understand the importance of protecting the vulnerable, and that will help them grow into good and moral human beings.

A quote often mis-attributed to Edmund Burke tells us that “the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” Regardless of who actually said it, the underlying truth speaks volumes. If we—as parents and educators—do nothing to help the children in our lives grow in their faith and learn to care for and protect the vulnerable, the sick, the elderly, and the preborn, evil will prevail.

That’s why—now more than ever—the CLSP is so relevant and so important.

Our lessons all help build a culture of life in your home or school so that you and your students can build a culture of life in your community. So whether you’re a teacher or a concerned parent, you can use any of our lessons to help your children or students grow in the faith. And this is exactly what we need in a world steeped in wokeness and godlessness.

## Is Sexual Activity Among Young Catholic Singles Declining?

Much solid research has shown that sexual activity among teen and young adult singles, among others, has declined significantly in recent years (1). However, little has been done to learn to what extent these declines meaningfully extend to religiously-affiliated people. That is a glaring omission.

Moreover, understanding if there has been a decline among their ranks and, if so, how much and in what ages particularly, is an important question for church leaders and parents responsible for effectively communicating Christian sexual ethics to their charges.

In this brief article I address this gap, focusing on young single Catholics particularly. As you will see, the story of declining sexual activity among young singles is reflected in statistics for Catholics but only partially and not to a degree that should give us much comfort (2).

The first four figures below show the percentages who have ever engaged in sexual intercourse, by age group and overall, for never-married Catholics 15 through 27. Figure 1—ages 15 through 27 combined—shows a statistically significant decline between 2002 and the 2018/2019 years overall and for active parishioners who attend Mass at least weekly. But the specific age graphs show that the only age group that really declined significantly—both overall and weekly Mass attenders—were those 18 through 22 (3). This is different than the overall decline among teens shown in analyses of NSFG data that did not take religion into account.

What about the complete lack of decline shown among those 23 through 27 in Figure 4? I think this is because Catholics who are more committed to chastity, whether or not

they have been completely successful or attend Mass faithfully, are more likely to marry at younger ages. In my position as a Christian college professor who teaches on marriage and family—and so interacts with them on such issues—this is certainly something I see among young religious people generally. There are probably less Catholic singles committed to chastity among those in their later 20s.

The next three figures focus only on never-married Catholics who have had sexual intercourse at least one time. The focus here is upon what percentages have been unusually promiscuous, measured here as three or more sex partners in their lifetime. Because those 15 through 17 have not had much time to build up a large number of partners, and most have not had sex at all yet, these figures are restricted to those 18 through 27.

For those 18 through 27 combined, shown in Figure 5, there is a statistically significant decline only between 2012/13 and 2018/19 for all Catholics as opposed to only those who attended Mass at least once a week. The same holds true for those 23 through 27, as shown in Figure 7. For those 18 through 22, shown in Figure 6, for all Catholics and not just those who attend Mass weekly or more, there was a significant decline between 2012/13 and 2014/15, but then it climbed again. Overall, there were no significant declines for those 18 through 22 (4).

The bottom line is that the percentages having three or more sex partners in their lifetime, for those who have ever had sex, show no decline over the entire period from 2002 forward, though we have seen some declines since 2012/13.

It is worth focusing on the 18 through 22 group, comparing Figures 2 and 6. For these young adult Catholic singles, the main issue is whether they commence having sexual intercourse at all. Since 2002, we have seen a marked decline in the percentages ever having sex. But among those who do begin having sex, most go on to have three or more sex partners. And that is not declining. Pastors and parents, take note: focus on preventing that first slip. When young Catholic singles have sex, they usually go on to multiple partners.

Finally, I examined trends for whether respondents had sex within the past year, or past three months, among those who had ever had sexual intercourse. I looked only at those 18 through 27, since the numbers of those 15 through 17 who had commenced sex were so small.

On the first of these, there were no meaningful long-term changes. For example, by group and total, in 2002 overall, percentages ranged between 10 percent and 12 percent having sex within the past year, while among weekly Mass attenders, percentages ranged from 16 to 19 percent. In 2018/19, they ranged from 8 percent to 14 percent overall, versus 12 percent to 13 percent among weekly church attenders. That is, there were no meaningful changes.

As for sex within the past three months, in 2002 overall, percentages ranged between 24 percent and 25 percent, while for weekly church attenders they ranged from 73 percent to 64 percent. In 2018/19, they ranged from 71 percent to 73 percent, versus 69 percent to 68 percent among weekly church attenders. For single Catholics 23 through 27 overall, the percentage who had sex within the past three months increased from 75 percent to 79 percent between 2002 and 2010, remaining level from two cycles

before dropping to 74 percent in 2016/17 and 71 percent in 2018/19. This is not meaningful change.

Overall, it is fair to say that most of the decline among young single Catholics in sexual activity in this analysis has been in two limited areas. First, there are those 18 through 22, both overall and weekly Mass attenders, ever having sex at all. Second, there are those 23 through 27 who have had sex with three or more partners in their lifetimes. For them, overall, there has been significant and steady decline since 2012/13.

But sadly, for weekly Mass attenders of that age group, the percentages having three or more partners actually increased, if anything, over that period, with a drop in 2014/15 before recommencing its climb. This analysis does not show major declines in sexual partners and activity, across the board, among young single Catholics.

Research on causes for decline in sexual activity among young singles overall suggests the influence of factors that have little to do with religious commitment. In fact, some are actually things which Catholic leaders would find morally problematic. Influencing factors include: being caught up in computer gaming, female fears of sexual practices they find degrading and even frightening, fewer young people exaggerating how much sex they have, sex devoid of human partners—such as porn and virtual reality, less involvement in romantic relationships, fears about the negative consequences of sex such as pregnancy and sexually-transmitted infections, fewer young people drinking heavily, and the so-called “MeToo” movement pushing cumbersome demands that young people obtain consent prior to sexual activity (5).

In those limited areas where there has been decline in sexual activity among young Catholic singles, could this be because they are becoming more committed to their Faith? That appears unlikely. Among never-married Catholics in the age groups we have looked at, in 2002 the percentages attending Mass at least weekly were 39 percent, 23 percent, and 19 percent for ages 15 through 17, 18 through 22, and 23 through 27, respectively.

By 2018/19, those percentages were 34 percent, 24 percent, 18 percent, similar with that for younger Catholics, actually having declined 5 percent. And asked how important religion is in their daily lives, 35 percent of single Catholics ages 15 through 27 said “very” in both 2002 and 2018/19. There is no evidence that the religious commitment of young single Catholics is improving, and therefore declines in their sexual activity cannot be traced to it.

As we social scientists find repeatedly and is evident here, however, commitment does matter. The first goal of Catholic clergy and parents who are concerned with chastity among single Catholics should be getting them involved in regular attendance and other aspects of the life of the Church. Only then can they be effectively encouraged and instructed in the Faith. One cannot give Church instruction and encouragement to people who are rarely in church.

But as we know, and is also obvious here, church attendance itself does not produce automatic results. Through the pulpit and other teaching ministries of the Church, Catholic young people need those in authority to provide them with sound instruction and example, rooted in the whole counsel of the Scriptures and historic Church teaching. We must not avoid tackling the tough issues, feelings, desires,

and attraction young people are wrestling with in an extremely difficult cultural landscape hostile to Christian sexual teaching.

There must also be efforts to strengthen their parents’ marriages and parenting skills and discourage unsound practices in dating, peer relations, and the use of media—especially the Internet. Then perhaps we will see much more significant decline in sexual activity among young Catholic singles, and for the right reasons.

Notes:

(1) Here are some major recent examples: Herbenick, Debby, Molly Rosenberg, Lilian Golzarri-Arroyo, J. Dennis Fortenberry, and Tsung-chieh Fu, “Changes in Penile-Vaginal Intercourse Frequency and Sexual Repertoire from 2009 to 2018: Findings from the National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* Vol. 51 (April 2022): 1419-1433; Williamson, Emily, “People Have Been Having Less Sex—Whether They’re Teenagers or 40-Somethings,” *Scientific American*, January 3, 2022. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/people-have-been-having-less-sex-whether-theyre-teenagers-or-40-somethings/>. And from 2015, then 2018: Leonard, Kimberly, “Teens Today Have Less Sex Than Their Parents Did,” *U.S News & World Report*, July 22, 2015, <https://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/data-mine/2015/07/22/cdc-report-shows-declines-in-teen-sexual-activity-pregnancies>; New, Michael J., “CDC Report Shows Reductions in Teen Sexual Activity,” *National Review*, January 8, 2018, <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/teen-sexual-activity-decline/>.

(2) I use the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Survey for Family Growth (NSFG). I go back to when they first began surveying both male and female respondents in 2002, then the next release cycle which covered years 2006 through 2010 combined. From there, I combined the last four cycles, separating the data into four two-year periods from 2012/13 through 2018/19. This allowed me to keep samples large enough to enable me to pull out young, single Catholics separately and still have meaningful data. Throughout, I combined male and female respondents separately and weighted the data to 50/50 male versus female to correct for the fact that females are consistently overrepresented in the NSFG.

(3) Differences between 2002 and 2018/2019 are significant at the probability of error  $< .01$  level for ages 15 through 27 inclusive, and for 18 through 22. But there are no statistically significant differences at all between these two time periods for ages 15 through 17, or 23 through 27.

David Ayers, PhD

<https://www.crisismagazine.com/2022/is-sexual-activity-among-young-catholic-singles-declining>

(4) Between 2012/13 and 2018/19 for all single Catholics ages 18 through 27 combined, there was a significant decline, probability of error  $< .05$ . For all single Catholics 18 through 22, the percentages significantly dropped between 2013/14 and 2014/15—probability of error  $< .05$ . But then those percentages climbed, and the drop from 2013/14 through 2018/19 was not significant, wiping out the temporary one-year improvement. For all single Catholics between 23 and 27, there was a significant decline between 2014/15 and 2018/19, probability of error  $< .05$ . For those 23 through 27 who were weekly Mass attenders, however, there was a significant rise between 2002 and 2012/13—probability or error  $< .05$ —and after that the decline was not statistically significant.

(5) Herbenick, Debby, Molly Rosenberg, Lilian Golzarri-Arroyo, J. Dennis Fortenberry, and Tsung-chieh Fu, "Changes in Penile-Vaginal Intercourse Frequency and Sexual Repertoire from 2009 to 2018," 1426-27.

## **Back-To-School In Uvalde Means Catholic School Scholarships For Hurting Families**

The school shooting that rocked Uvalde, Texas continues to affect young children and their families. As these families try to recover, a Catholic charity with a longtime link to the area has funded 30 scholarships so that students may attend the local Catholic school.

“The tuition assistance means everything to my son and our family,” said Oscar Orona, whose son survived the school shooting. “My son has gone through a lot, and still has a long road to recovery ahead. At the very least, he deserves to go to a school where he feels safe.”

Catholic Extension is supporting 30 students who were affected by the mass shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, a city of about 15,000 in south central Texas 50 miles from the U.S.-Mexico border.

On May 24, an 18-year-old gunman entered the school and killed 19 children and two teachers. Another 14 children and a teacher were wounded. Sacred Heart Church hosted funeral Masses for 11 of the victims.

The Mass for 46-year-old teacher Irma Garcia also remembered her 50-year-old husband, Joe Garcia, who died of a heart attack two days after his wife’s death.

Eleven of the new students at Sacred Heart were wounded in the shooting. Their former school is less than a mile and a half away.

Joe Boland, vice president of missions at Catholic Extension, was at Sacred Heart School on Monday, the first day of school.

“For many of these children, literally the last memory of being in a school building was

an experience of a mass shooting,” Boland told *CNA* on Tuesday.

“We’re very encouraged by the kind of loving, joyful, faithful environment that they are creating at Sacred Heart School in Uvalde and it really gives us hope that it will be a place where these children can begin the long process of healing after the atrocities that they witnessed,” Boland said.

For more than a century, Catholic Extension has worked to serve Catholic parishes and communities in remote areas. It has deep roots in Uvalde. In 1906 the charity sent aid to build Sacred Heart Church and in 1912 it began to fund the construction of the school, which adjoins the church.

“When this horrible crime occurred Catholic Extension remembered its unique connection to the faith community,” Boland said.

Principal Joseph Olan of Sacred Heart School told *CNA* he wants the school to be a place “where all children will understand that the love for Jesus is the center of (an) academic journey.”

“My hopes for the school year is that our school culture continues to reflect a place of grace, unity, and love,” he said Aug. 17.

“My overall hope is that the students, families, and community understand that school is more than just a place for teaching and learning. It is a beacon of hope for the community, one that can also educate the heart as much as the mind,” the principal said.

Boland praised the local community’s response to the shooting.

“We are in awe of how the church there rose to the occasion to really accompany these families, who had experienced unimaginable loss and accompanied the entire community, who have experienced just trauma that is going to take many, many years to get over,” he said.

The Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District permanently closed Robb Elementary School and has worked to disperse students to other public schools, though in this small district only four other schools serve primary grade students.

Catholic Extension learned that many families wanted to transfer their children to the nearby Catholic school, but they faced economic barriers. About 80% of the families of Uvalde are low-income households. At least 80 families in total might seek to transfer their students to the Catholic school.

Catholic Extension is asking for donations to its scholarship fund to help meet demand. “We’re calling upon people to consider giving to the fund,” Boland said.

The Teresian Sisters, formally known as the Society of St. Theresa of Jesus, have worked at the school for over a century.

With the support of Catholic Extension, sisters from other religious communities will assist them this year. Six additional religious sisters were scheduled to be at Sacred Heart School the first week of class to help provide emotional assistance to both students and teachers. They aim to provide spiritual comfort, peace, and solidarity. Over the next 18 months, about 100 religious sisters will serve Uvalde and the Catholic community in various ways.

“It was very powerful to see a group of Catholic sisters from a number of different congregations just be in the classrooms yesterday with the children,” Boland said.

Olan, the school principal, described the sisters as “phenomenal.”

“Our students and staff truly enjoy their company, guidance and wisdom,” he said. “I have noticed that students look to them as mentors, role models, and as friends of Jesus!”

Boland said Catholic Extension wants the scholarship fund to provide an “avenue of healing” so that children and their parents “are going to be able to heal, move forward, and do so through the lens of their own Catholic faith.”

“It’s a difficult, painful moment for this for this local community, especially the Catholic faith community that has been so much a part of the lives of the people there,” he said. For Boland, the commitment to helping these children and their families is “a proud moment for the Church.”

The Catholic Church and the Archdiocese of San Antonio are “going to continue to walk with these families for the long haul,” said Boland, who noted the presence of Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller of San Antonio at Sacred Heart School’s opening Mass.

Archbishop Garcia-Siller summarized to Good Morning America his message for the schoolchildren: “God wants to bring everyone joy and glory in heaven. but it is not our time yet. So we need to carry on, and to carry on with joy, because our life has meaning.”

Like the local public schools, Sacred Heart Catholic School has announced efforts to upgrade security. All school supplies, including backpacks, have been donated for pre-K through sixth-grade students at the Catholic school.

The Chicago-based Catholic Extension, formerly known as the Catholic Church

Kevin J. Jones

<https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2022/08/18/back-to-school-in-uvalde-means-catholic-school-scholarships-for-hurting-families/>

Extension Society, was founded in 1905 to help provide the sacraments and other aid to Catholics in remote areas. Today, the organization helps more than 15 million American Catholics. Its work includes grants to build churches and repair facilities. Catholic Extension also provides scholarships for emerging leaders and works to empower various ministries.

## Man Arrested For Burglary, Property Destruction At Catholic School In DC

Police have arrested and charged the man believed to have vandalized St. Anthony School in Washington, D.C., last week.

The property destruction led to national outcry and support for a Catholic school celebrating its 100th year this fall.

St. Anthony's principal of 12 years, Michael Thomasian, believes the incident was a hate crime targeted at the school's Catholic witness. The school serves grades Pre-K-8 in the Brookland neighborhood.

In a phone interview with *CNA*, Thomasian pointed out that the only objects destroyed in the attack were Catholic symbols of the faith.

"Vandalism is always a violation," Thomasian said, "but the devastation is elevated when sacred statues, symbols of our faith and Christian identity, are desecrated."

"I don't know what else to say, it was an act full of hate," he added.

The incident is being investigated as a potential hate crime, [the Washington Metropolitan Police Department said](#), in which 32-year-old Demetrius Hansford of Northeast Washington vandalized the school's St. Anthony of Padua statue, stole \$1,400 in cash, and trampled areas on the property in two incidents, on Aug. 10 and Aug. 15.

Hansford was charged with vandalism and theft Aug. 16.

The St. Anthony statue, which has been a fixture at the school for eight years, was toppled over in the attack. Statues of the

Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph were also desecrated, in addition to Advent candles.

The head of the St. Anthony statue broke off in the fall and is still missing, according to Thomasian. He told *CNA* that the school seeks the help of anyone in the community who may have knowledge as to its whereabouts, so that it can be returned and fixed.

### *More than a statue*

How the statue came to the school was the result of one parent's good idea and a search that ended with a blessing.

Thomasian's effort to move the school's front entrance in 2014 was a major upgrade, with a new central location, small flower beds, and the American flag.

"But something was missing," Thomasian reflected. When parent and neighbor Maria Jones suggested the school find a statue of its patron, St. Anthony of Padua, the search for the perfect one began.

High-quality religious statues are expensive and often hard to find, but a local pastor, Monsignor Charles Pope from Holy Comforter-St. Cyprian, gifted the school at just the right time.

"I received word from [Msgr. Pope] that he had a wonderful statue that just needed his hand fixed," Thomasian remembered. "Needless [to say], we found the money to fix the hand and transport St. Anthony to his new home. The children and I planted flowers and our pastor, Fr. Fred, blessed our patron."

### *“An army” of support*

While the attacks on the St. Anthony statue and rest of the school property have been a big blow on the school, Thomasian says that “there’s been an army” of support and love from the surrounding community.

Raquel Terry, a teacher and a parent of two students, started [a Go Fund Me page](#) to help raise funds for repairs and replacements following the vandalism. So far, supporters have donated more than \$32,000, exceeding the goal.

Thomasian says that the attacks have helped the school, church, and neighborhood family

Eddie Heipel

<https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2022/08/18/man-arrested-for-burglary-property-destruction-at-catholic-school-in-dc/>

come together. “We were reminded of our identity and our mission and we re-commit ourselves to the work,” Thomasian said, adding, “our theme is ‘looking back with gratitude, looking forward with joy!’”

Meanwhile, the school has been cleaning up the grounds and getting ready for the start of St. Anthony’s 100th school year, which starts Aug. 29.

“We’re very excited. A lot of schools are closed in the city, but we’re still open. We’re full and we’re thriving,” Thomasian added.

## Nearly 2 Million Fewer Students Have Enrolled In Public School

*The pandemic has changed the way children are taught with more families opting for less traditional forms of schooling.*

Almost 2 million students stopped attending public schools between 2020 and 2021, enrollment data shows.

In [a recent poll](#) from Education Next, district-operated schools lost 4 percent of their students during those two years, with those children enrolling in other types of schooling.

In the spring of 2020, 81 percent of schoolchildren in the United States were enrolled in district schools, according to parental response to the poll.

By November of that year, enrollment in district schools had plummeted to 72 percent, according to Education Next numbers.

Education Next poll crafters acknowledged in a statement that that decline could stem from parents choosing to remove their children from district schools to charter or private schools, but the decline could also be linked to parents not knowing how to define their children's school when learning was done mostly online.

Alejandra-O'Connell-Domenech

<https://thehill.com/changing-america/enrichment/education/3604392-nearly-2-million-fewer-students-have-enrolled-in-public-school/>

Last spring, district school enrollment bounced back up to 77 percent and enrollment has hovered at that rate since then, according to the publication's most recent poll.

That percentage drop means that almost 2 million students have left a traditional public school for either a charter or private school or to be homeschooled.

Poll findings show that the three other schooling alternatives have seen bumps in enrollment numbers. In 2022, private school enrollment ticked up to 10 percent compared to 8 percent in the spring of 2020, and the number of U.S. children attending a charter school went up from 5 percent to 7 percent over that same period of time.

More children appear to be taking their course work at home, the poll found. Over the past two years, the portion of the country's students being homeschooled bumped up from 6 to 7 percent, which represents a doubling from 2016 numbers.

## California School Lifts Mask Mandate After Cops Respond For 4-Year-Old Without Face Covering Being Sent Home

A California school district has lifted its policy requiring students to wear masks inside after a 4-year-old student without a face covering was sent home Thursday in a caught-on-camera incident that resulted in a police response.

The encounter that preceded the policy reversal at the Mountain View Whisman School District was recorded on a cellphone by the boy's father, who has since spoken out against the old directive.

[Video posted to YouTube shows](#) the maskless youngster jogging into Theuerkauf Elementary School in Mountainview when the school's principal, Michelle Williams, intervened.

"I welcome him here and I've said this before and I'll say it again, I want him here but it is our district's policy to have to wear a mask," Williams tells the boy's father.

The clip later shows the boy escorted out of his classroom by Williams with a slip of paper. He runs over to his father and innocently asks, "Daddy, what does it say?" video shows.

A police officer was also called to the school and spoke briefly with the father, according to the footage.

"I just think it's time to move forward, the kids need to see faces, they need to see people smiling, they need to have a brighter outlook on the future in general," the father, who only identified himself as Shawn, [told ABC7](#).

The father said he recorded the video to share with fellow parents.

His son, he said, has developmental issues and won't keep his mask on. As a result, he couldn't go to school.

"I'm watching my son. I'm waking him up every day to go to school, get turned away with tears in his eyes," Shawn said. "He doesn't know what's going on, he's visibly upset, visibly disheveled by getting turned away and rejected."

The 4-year-old boy was turned away from Theuerkauf Elementary School in Mountainview when he showed up without a mask.

The father's attorney, Tracy Henderson with the California Parents Union, said the school broke the law by sending the child home.

"The school's authority in a situation of public health issues, by law, is only to send a sick child home," she told ABC7.

After Shawn shared the video, the school board made masks optional in schools at Thursday night's board meeting.

"We are now in the medium tier, so starting tomorrow, we are now in "masks optional" for students," said Superintendent Ayinde Rudolph, the outlet reported.

Rudolph noted that 50 students and 12 staff members had tested positive for COVID-19 in the first five days of class.

Masks will still be required on buses, at large events and for school visitors, according to the outlet.

Patrick Reilly

<https://nypost.com/2022/08/19/california-school-lifts-mask-mandate-after-4-year-old-sent-home/>

## Uvalde Catholic School Offers Scholarships For Robb Elementary Transfers

*Along with assistance in tuition, Sacred Heart Catholic School has increased security and brought in nuns for emotional and spiritual support.*

The Sacred Heart Catholic School in Uvalde, Texas, is raising funds to aid former students of [Robb Elementary](#) who wish to transfer in the coming school year. Along with tuition assistance, the Archdiocese of San Antonio is also bringing in a team of religious sisters who will provide emotional and spiritual assistance in the coming semesters.

The school year began this week for students from Uvalde, many of whom from Robb Elementary had to decide if they would return to the public school, transfer to a private school, or switch to homeschooling. [According to Go Santangelo](#), however, many families of this working-class community do not have the funds for private school, or the availability to teach their children from home.

### ***Sacred Heart***

To address this, the Archdiocese of San Antonio has vowed assistance to as many children as it can accommodate. Good Morning America's (GMA) August 16 report, featured above, notes that Sacred Heart has already doubled its enrolled students, with 11 of them having been children who were injured in the Robb Elementary shooting.

In the interview with GMA, Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller of San Antonio spoke about a Mass he celebrated for Sacred Heart at the beginning of the school year. He said that while trying to communicate with Robb Elementary students he found that it was easier to interact with them if he both spoke and used sign language.

He explained that the motion of his hands would help engage these children who exhibit the long hard stares of children who have experienced traumatic events. The Archbishop said:

“It was a breakthrough. So I said to them ‘Do you feel very sad?’” Archbishop García-Siller made the ASL hand gesture for sadness, then he asked the kids, “What is what you want?” and the children responded with the hand gesture for “peace.” The prelate said of the interaction “I was just for them and with them and I felt so happy that I was able to connect with them.”

### ***Scholarship***

With room in Sacred Heart for 170 students, the school wants to accommodate as many children from Robb Elementary as possible. [According to an August 15 report from KSAT](#), there are 80 families who are seeking to transfer.

KSAT went on to report that the scholarships are funded in conjunction with [Catholic Extension](#), a national 501 fundraising organization that supports Church missions. Catholic Extension is also supplying the school district with a team of six religious sisters who will tend to the school and communities' children with emotional and spiritual support. These services will be available for both students and staff for the next 18 months.

### ***Security***

In order to help parents feel more comfortable leaving their kids at school, the

Archdiocese has also broadened school security with the help of Convergent Technologies. [According to a report from KENS5](#), Convergent Technologies has donated and installed a \$42,000 security system at Sacred Heart. This includes cameras, magnetic door locks, a key card system and wiring and hardware placed throughout the school.

J-P Mauro

<https://aleteia.org/2022/08/18/uvalde-catholic-school-offers-scholarships-for-robb-elementary-transfers/>

These efforts will go towards keeping Uvalde students safe and to help return them to a mental state in which they can learn once again. Archbishop García-Siller concluded his interview with a message to the children:

“God wants everyone to enjoy glory in heaven, but it’s not our time yet. So we need to carry on and to carry on with joy, because our life has meaning.”

## Philip Rivers Continues To Inspire Off the Field By Taking Students To a Shrine

*The former quarterback is ensuring that his students receive more than just his sports knowledge.*

There was an unusual sight at the [Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament](#), in Alabama, on August 12. The former professional football quarterback Philip Rivers arrived accompanied by 70 students from St. Michael's Catholic High School in Fairhope, where Rivers is now the head coach.

A [year before announcing his retirement](#) from the professional football league in 2021, the dad-of-nine shared: "I (had) two childhood dreams. One was playing in the NFL. I still love that. The other was to be a high school football coach as my dad was."

And he is taking his role very much to heart. Not only is Rivers ensuring the athletic progress of his students, he's also seeing to the spiritual needs of his students before a game.

In fact, the 70 junior varsity and varsity football players stopped at the shrine as they were heading to River's high school alma mater, Athens High School, for a pre-season game, [according to One Voice](#). Yet before donning their football gear, the team spent time together camping and then did some team building at the Diocese of Birmingham's Camp Tekawitha in Springville.

En route to the game the team also visited the Cenacolo Community and then the shrine, where they were able to go to a noon Mass celebrated by Bishop Emeritus Robert Baker, spend time in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and participate in a talk about Mother Angelica.

### *A personal connection*

The religious sister is well-known for founding EWTN, but she also founded the shrine after having a [vision in Columbia that instructed her to build a temple that would honor the Child Jesus](#). She was instrumental in making sure the "Romanesque-Gothic architecture and breathtaking art facilitated prayer and worship. [Stating] "Only the best for God," according to the shrine's website.

Rivers shared in a little more detail what the team had been doing, and the personal connection he had with the shrine:

"We've been on kind of camp / retreat: Camp Tekawitha and then over to the Cenacolo Community to visit those brothers there whose stories are so impactful. [They] are fighting to grow and get back on track in their faith and in their lives, and that was very impactful for me, our staff, and our players. Then coming here to the shrine is special for me. ... Its special to my family. My wife was a convert and Mother Angelica, tapes, and EWTN were a big part of that."

He continued: "At St. Michael's ... we talk about the whole young man, wanting to grow in our faith, in our academics, and on the football field. The Holy Spirit was alive and working here on these young men and hopefully it will have an impact on them in their future."

Rivers seems to be truly embracing his role as head coach to the young men at St. Michael's. Hopefully these youngsters can

learn not only from their coach's impressive football skills, but also from his deep devotion to God.

Cerith Gardiner

<https://aleteia.org/2022/08/26/philip-rivers-continues-to-inspire-off-the-field-by-taking-students-to-a-shrine>

In the video below from the [shrine's Facebook page](#), you can listen to Rivers give more detail about the trip:

## Are You Smarter Than an 8th Grader? Take This Catechesis Quiz

The National Catholic Register [reported](#) this month that one Catholic school's decision to begin every day with Mass has transformed the spiritual lives of both students and the broader parish community — and soared the school to second place among 30 diocesan schools that took a catechesis assessment test.

One of the Church's biggest struggles in recent years has been the problem of inadequate catechesis, for children and adults alike.

The problem of poorly catechized Catholics is evident in recent polls. An EWTN/Real Clear Opinion Research [poll](#) conducted this July, for example, showed that [38%](#) of Catholic likely voters do not believe in the Real Presence of the Eucharist. The same poll also found that [35%](#) never go to confession — a sacrament required by Church law at least annually.

Overall, the poll found that only [20%](#) of Catholics accept all Church teachings.

### *Identifying and solving the problem of catechesis*

The [Assessment of Religious Knowledge](#), or the ARK test, is meant to be a step forward in remedying the catechesis problem in K-12 schools.

Developed by the [Sophia Institute](#) — a Catholic non-profit dedicated to serving Catholic education and teachers — the ARK tool helps measure the effectiveness of religious education programs in parishes and schools across the country.

It does this through a survey that faculty, catechists, and students take, split up by

grade. Each test includes questions about knowledge and belief and behaviors that cover six categories: Sacraments & Liturgy; The Creed & Salvation History; Morality; Prayer; Virtue; and Living Discipleship.

After the assessment is completed, the platform allows school administrators and faculty to see important results about the religious formation of their students and faculty. This includes problem areas so that schools can identify and start to bridge gaps in their religious education programs.

Rob Kenney, the Executive Director of ARK, said in a statement to CNA that the tool “helps schools and parishes easily identify successes and opportunities for both students and faculty, review individual knowledge growth, and compare against national averages.”

### *More than an assessment*

But it's not just only about the children, Kenney explained: “We also recognize the importance of forming the teacher, so ARK helps guide professional development at an individual, school and parish, or even diocese level.”

ARK also offers teachers free, curated resources based on their school's results to supplement teachers' own learning and supply free resources for their class.

Kenney sees the ARK test as more than an assessment tool, but a part of a broader evangelization effort.

“All this ties into engaging in continuous improvement for religious education that will help all of us not only know more, but also have a greater love for our faith; and

best of all, help direct us toward Heaven,” he said.

With the help of ARK, CNA put together a sample version of the assessment so that you can test your own knowledge. Take the quiz below.

How well do you know your catechesis? Take the ARK test for 8th graders.

***What is conscience?***

- God’s voice in our hearts
- Moral feelings which form to support cultural customs
- The source of the moral law for every individual
- The urge for self-preservation

***Which is a reason a person should not receive Communion at Mass?***

- They have committed venial sins
- They have unconfessed mortal sins
- They have fasted for an hour beforehand
- They felt distracted during the homily

***Who knows when the Last Judgment will occur?***

- The pope
- The angels
- God the Father
- None of these

***Which of the following people should receive Anointing of the Sick?***

- A person who has been sick with a sinus infection for over a month

- An elderly person facing a grave illness
- A college student who is feeling homesick
- A person who has recovered from a life-threatening virus

***St. Paul wrote an epistle to the churches in all the following places EXCEPT:***

- Ephesus
- Thessalonica
- Samaria
- Rome

***Which of the following is a capital sin?***

- Envy
- Disobedience
- Presumption
- Curiosity

***Which of the following is a sacrament of healing?***

- Penance
- Baptism
- Holy Orders
- Eucharist

***Who is called to chastity?***

- Priests and religious
- Married people
- Single people
- All of these

***Correct answers:***

1. God’s voice in our hearts; 2. They have unconfessed mortal sins; 3. God the Father; 4. An elderly person facing a grave illness; 5. Samaria; 6. Envy; 7. Penance; 8. All of these.

Eddie Heipel

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/252131/are-you-smarter-than-an-8th-grader-take-this-catechesis-quiz>

## Inside the First Catholic Classical School In Austria

*A Catholic school in Austria is the first in that country to offer a unique, classically-based approach to education for young students.*

EWTN News In-Depth Correspondent Colm Flynn recently visited St. Thomas More School in Austria, where students and faculty members spoke about the values that run the culture at the school and the benefits that come from a classical approach to education.

One of the immediately noticeable things about the school is the sense of joy that seems to radiate from the students, which was reaffirmed by many of the students' comments.

"I've had a great relationship between teachers and students," said one student. "And I really like the community; I am proud to be here."

Perhaps one of the reasons why many of the students seem to enjoy the school can be traced back to the principal values that contour the experience at the school.

The school was initially founded by parents who wanted to give their children a real Catholic education. Dr. Christiaan Alting Von Geusau, one of the founding parents, talked about the vision of the school.

"Well, I think the first thing that has to be said is Austria certainly has a very high level of school education, academically speaking," Von Geusau said. "But ... we were [also] looking for two other things: we were looking for a profoundly Catholic environment ... and second, a school that goes back to the classical Catholic liberal arts."

The latter perspective is what is particularly unique about the school's education philosophy, as it seeks to teach and emphasize to students the importance of critical thinking — emphasizing logic over sole memorization.

According to Von Geusau, this emphasis on learning how to think is why rhetoric, grammar, and logic are the first three steps that students learn — which EWTN had the opportunity to see in action through the students' dissection and subsequent presentation of a mock court case.

Additionally, as with any school, the teachers are crucial for establishing a productive and welcoming environment for all the students. Anni Sellner spoke about her experience teaching at the school.

"I started when the school started, actually; it was really an adventure for me," Sellner said. "And I was able to grow also with the school."

Von Geusau hopes that the school's Catholic perspective allows the students to think critically about God's creation — while also having the support of the Catholic Church's tradition of truth guiding them in the process.

"What we as Catholics can do is we can bring in a rich tradition ... but ... we can bring in the most important question: what did God the Creator intend with this? ... And that broadens the perspective enormously," Von Geusau said.

Leonardo Colon

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/252112/inside-first-catholic-classical-school-in-austria>

## The Church Has a Science Problem

*How do we approach science properly speaking and not just its devolution into cult?*

It has become fairly common in these post-Covid times to distinguish very carefully between science and scientism, or between science and The Science™. The distinction generally goes something like this: Science is a method for gaining objective, observable knowledge about the world through devising experiments with repeatable results, accruing over time, and supposed to be self-correcting as our knowledge and understanding of the observable world grows more detailed.

Scientism, or The Science™, on the other hand is more like a cult: one blindly follows what one is told is true, one may not question the narrative of the leaders (the lab-coat wearers), and one must even have some kind of an outward signifier of participation (in the case of Covid: masks, vaccination cards, and boosters).

To be sure, scientism is dangerous and can devolve into the absurd, such as when Anthony Fauci declared that attacks on himself were attacks on science (one wonders what the reaction would be if any pontiff proclaimed that to attack himself would be to attack God), and it is good and fair that these distinctions be articulated, and criticisms of the cult-like actions of those that claim to follow The Science™ are being made. There is, however, a subtler problem, one with which we as a Church have been dealing for at least the past three centuries and one which I think has yet to be resolved. That is, how do we approach science properly speaking and not just its devolution into cult?

### ***Knowledge without understanding***

Much of the commentary I have read over the past two years critical of the way we have been handling this pandemic has been prefaced with something along the lines of “I am vaccinated, but...” or “I believe the science, however...”; that is to say, there is always some deference paid to the reigning scientific regime—a regime, I might add, may have unleashed this pandemic on the world in the first place. But this kind of offering at the altar of science before any attempt to criticize pre-existed Covid. Any theoretical, philosophical, or theological criticism of science as a method seems as if it must also be accompanied by a qualification along the lines of the author acknowledging that he quite enjoys his car, or artificial light, or the benefits of modern medicine.

### ***The toll has to be paid before moving ahead***

This kind of obligation needs to stop. Living in an order shaped by modern science and the technology that has resulted therefrom does not mean we cannot criticize or even outright condemn that very order. The deference showed to the modern scientific and resulting technological regime betrays a much deeper problem that I believe infects the entire world. But I will limit myself here to the Church: we have ceded judgment about reality to the modern scientific method, and in so doing imply that we do not actually or fully believe what the Church has to say about reality.

Criticisms of the modern scientific method have more or less been co-terminus with its

existence. Goethe is notable as one who saw with great insight that isolating a part in order to know more about the whole will always produce a distorted understanding of both, thus his emphasis in studying wholes in nature.<sup>1</sup> There was already resistance to Descartes's splitting of the world into *res cogitans* and *res extensa* even as he proposed it. But in the West in particular, Enlightenment ideas of what it means to know something took over what it means to know anything at all. And such that knowledge effectively became what it means to make something perform a certain action, whether that meant melting down celluloid to produce what we now call plastic, capturing nitrogen to put into our soil so that we can grow things, or knowing which inputs will get the desired output from human immune systems so that we can fend off disease.

This shift from knowledge as understanding to knowledge as making has been traced and analyzed with great insight many times (not least in Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's [Introduction to Christianity](#)). Indeed, on some level, we know the problem with the radical shift that takes place in the Enlightenment and therefore of what it means to know something: the isolation of anything apart from its greater environment may convey a certain kind of mechanical knowledge about that thing to me, but apart from its community I do not actually know that much about the thing.

For example: it is true that if we artificially isolate nitrogen and introduce it into our soil that our plants will likely grow more fully and rapidly—under laboratory conditions. But it is also true that if we introduce nitrogen into our soil year after year in the form of fertilizer, our crops grow weaker—their roots do not go down as far in search of the nutrients they need, and so we end up

producing weaker crops that are more dependent on human intervention and thus a bad cycle of intervention-dependent fragile crops feeds into itself (and, handily, into the coffers of companies such as Monsanto). It is in a lab that we figured out nitrogen is a key component for healthy crops, but the necessary spatio- and temporal isolation in that same lab prevents us from seeing the full picture, which would include the fact that plants grow in an environment rather than simply as a result of human inputs.

The issue, put somewhat oversimply, is that the modern scientific method has no other way of understanding the world than through the lens of human input and therefore necessarily cannot see the larger whole, which of course includes the fact that there is always much more outside of human control than inside of it. This then becomes a problem that we must solve through technology: we try to place more and more of the world under our control, so we can predict the outputs. This a losing game, and always will be, as should now be evident to anyone paying attention for, apparently, in trying to “get ahead” of the next pandemic in a lab in Wuhan, we actually unleashed it on the world.

Again, a good deal of this has already been articulated by others more insightful than I am. But notice what I just outlined above is not a result of scientism, but rather of what we call science. Science and technology as we know them change the whole world into what Heidegger called “standing reserve”: material there for human input and desired output, with no intrinsic order or nature of its own—no “self” for humans to know and come to understand, rather just “stuff” for humans to use. And because there is no intrinsic order, because there is no whole in which man participates (perhaps in a particularly wonderful way, but in which

he participates nonetheless), man then has no choice but to try and order (read: control) the chaos in which he thinks he finds himself.

### *A narrow and distorted worldview*

This is the vision of reality the modern scientific method bestows on us, and it is to this vision we give deference every time we pay tribute to the regime of science by tempering our critiques with choruses of “but I am not criticizing the lightbulb.” Maybe I am indeed criticizing the lightbulb, as it has reordered our vision of reality such that we no longer pay heed to the sun, and therefore to natural human rhythms, and has allowed us to believe that second and third shifts are perfectly normal, and therefore induced many of our fellow human beings to work long hours in factories or fulfillment warehouses at night, and led us to thinking this is not only normal but right. Perhaps the lightbulb was a mistake: we should be able to discuss this freely in order to understand just how distorted our worldview has become, rather than being constantly afraid of not being taken seriously by a worldview that does not in fact take the given world and order in which we live seriously.

This does seem to be what is at the root of the tribute-making—the desire to be taken seriously. We think that in order to be a part of adult conversations about the world and what goes on in it that we must tip our hat, so to speak, in one way or another to the techno-scientific paradigm dictating for so long what it means to have so-called adult conversations. Sure, we can have our metaphysical and theological conversations, but when we get down to brass tacks—if we want people to pay attention to what we have to say—we must at least lay down some coin on the altar of the Enlightenment vision of the world, at the very least to say

how much we enjoy the products of that narrow and distorted worldview.

The problem, of course, is that it is a worldview. Science as we understand it today is not a neutral method by which to observe the world (as it is so often painted), but rather most fundamentally a way of seeing and understanding the world and its order (or lack thereof) that then determines our actions. Make no mistake: what we understand something to be determines how we act on or toward it. If the whole world really is standing reserve for us to do with as we will, then there are no natural guides or limits on what we should do to or with anything in it—indeed, there really is no such thing as the natural at all, for the word “nature” indicates an order which precedes and exceeds man (*natura*: the character or constitution of thing, from the Latin *natus*: born).

If we, however, do understand that nature—that is, a given order—exists, then the implicit directive in that knowledge is we must pay attention and give heed to that order precisely because it precedes and exceeds us. Again, to put this somewhat oversimply, there are two competing worldviews here: man controls everything because there is no order in the world unless and until he wills it, or man stands and participates in an already given order which he ignores at his peril

### *Stopping the erosion of nature*

What, the reader may ask, does this have to do with the Church? What I have just laid out above shows that what we are dealing with is not a method of study of the world that at times happens to produce some unexpectedly poor results, but rather an entirely different vision of reality than the one the Church holds and knows to be true.

Many of the Enlightenment thinkers were in large part self-conscious about this: they wanted to break with tradition (Tradition) and conceive an entirely new way of looking at and dealing with the world—one in which man gives and controls its order. But the Church holds that the world is given by God and therefore the order of nature is not something to be made but an infinitely fruitful gift that man has been given to know, understand, and, yes, have dominion over—but this last directive only in and through the first two.

The Christian worldview is not the only one to recognize that nature has an order which we must know and understand before we are able to work with its ends for our benefit. But it is the worldview that recognizes this truth most radically, since the Church recognizes the source of the natural order: God himself. And it seems the Church may also be the last and strongest groyne preventing the complete erosion of nature by the techno-scientific paradigm.

I am not arguing that the Church and all who wish to think with and in her move to some kind of Amish-like existence, foregoing anything that results from the techno-scientific worldview (though perhaps we might at least seriously consider the wisdom in rejecting any product of such a worldview). For it seems to me she is never called simply to remove herself from the world—this we have been taught since her birth, and has been affirmed throughout the Tradition.

What I am arguing, however, is that the Church cease engaging uncritically with this alternative worldview and all that has resulted therefrom, and certainly to stop being embarrassed about her critique. Yes, we need to deal with in and in the world, for the Church was born for the world's

salvation. But we need not be embarrassed by what the Church knows to be true.

### *Criticism and confidence*

Any time that tribute, as I have been calling it, is paid to the techno-scientific worldview, it subtly undermines the vision of reality the Church has been given. It is not simply scientism or The Science™ that we must criticize, but science itself—that is, this method of obtaining information about the world that allows us to think things with natures are just parts for our disposal. Because it is science that has recast our vision of the world as something that can be picked apart, toyed with, and reassembled at our will. This is, to repeat, antithetical to the Christian vision of reality as an order given by God for man to work with and in order ultimately come to know God himself (Rom. 1:20).

Most of all we need, I think, not just to be critical of this vision of the world and recognize it as such, but what is more necessary as a Church is for us to remember and be confident in the knowledge that the Church indeed does have final and fullest word on reality precisely because it has been bestowed on her by her Bridegroom. This does not, of course, mean that the Lord has given his Bride instructions for the best agricultural practices in every climate on earth. Rather, the Church has been given the certain knowledge that everything in the physical world has a metaphysical nature created by God himself and is therefore something which we must respect and to which we must pay attention in order to know the world at all (and in so doing, we can then figure out the best agricultural practices for each climate).

This means that while engaging in critiques of science or its products to remember that it

is not necessary to justify the Church's full understanding of reality—a reality she knows is made up of more than just the immediately visible and otherwise sensible, a reality that is saturated with the metaphysical, which both grounds and bears upon the physical—to the incomplete techno-scientific model of reality.

The framework for reality on which modern science relies is far too narrow—far too small for what reality actually is—and the Church is probably one of the only places (and persons) left on earth that knows this and carries it in living memory. As such, it is her duty to speak this truth, not by reducing what she knows to fit into an insufficient framework (for this is what we do when we attempt to make arguments, e.g., about the inviolability of life based only on biology), but by proclaiming and arguing it based on her full vision of reality.

I am always struck, when I read Church Fathers, such as St. Athanasius: he did not try to fit the Incarnation and Resurrection into the framework of his time. Rather, he showed that the framework of the time was totally insufficient to reality itself; he showed that reality is far more than we thought it was—that indeed the physical world could not just come into contact with, but welcome what is truly divine—and that is what was and continues to be compelling.

### ***Conclusion***

The Church has a science problem—and it is not that she gives too little heed to modern science, but perhaps that she pays it too much. Of course it is her duty to engage with and understand the world better than it knows itself, which includes understanding modern science from within—indeed in some sense the Church must become the “expert” on modern science precisely

because she “sees more” (to quote from Hans Urs von Balthasar's [Epilogue](#)) than modern science. She can see behind and beyond the modern scientific method and its judgments about reality, and she understand it better than it understands itself because she sees the whole that it, by its very nature, cannot.

The Church has a duty to show the world the truth of reality, which is always much more than our ideas about it, or our attempts to control it. And her duty, it seems to me, includes the full proclamation and confidence that her vision and understanding of reality as a gift from the Creator, in its full metaphysical and theological depth, is the final judgment on what is right and just, not the scientific and medical experts.

Science is not a neutral method of observing reality, but rather a way of viewing the world, and as such, like any worldview, it can easily slide into believing it and only it sees the world truly. It is vulnerable, like any other worldview, to its own ism-ification. Only the Church is immune to this (and only because she is born from the side of Christ). We cede too much ground if and when we try to fit the Church's vision of reality into an insufficient framework in order to be taken seriously.

We do not ever need to justify ourselves or our understanding to the techno-scientific model of reality, rather we need to justify our knowledge to reality itself—that is the only measure by which knowledge and understanding can be judged, and the Church first and foremost performs this judgment best because it is she who sees the whole.

Endnotes:

1 Goethe is also worth mentioning because his thought has generated a way of observing nature—which we may call science—that has continued to this day, though has been significantly outpaced by

more Darwinian-influenced strains of observation and theory. For more on a Goethean-inspired science of wholes, see the work of the brilliant biologists at [The Nature Institute](#) in Ghent, NY.

Rachel M. Coleman

<https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2022/08/25/the-church-has-a-science-problem/>

## USDA Exempts Religious Schools From LGBT Rule Change Threatening Free Lunch Funds

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has reversed a policy that would have required Catholic schools that participate in a federal free lunch program to comply with the Biden administration's LGBTQ mandates.

Nevertheless, some Catholic schools, such as those of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, are choosing to drop out of the program.

Earlier this year the Biden administration re-interpreted Title IX's federal ban on sex discrimination to include "sexual orientation or gender identity." Religious freedom and free speech advocates warn that the change could be used to enforce mandates on hiring, bathrooms, using preferred pronouns, and dress codes.

The broadened definition also applies to the [National School Lunch Program](#), a federally funded meal assistance program administered by the Department of Agriculture that provides subsidized or free lunches to more than 30 million public and private school students from [low-income](#) households.

On Aug. 12, the department published a [memo](#) saying that although the rule applies to most public and private schools across the country, it includes an exception for schools to "be exempt on religious grounds if there is a conflict between Title IX and a school's governing religious tenets."

The memo states that the Title IX regulations "do not require a religious educational institution to submit a written request for a Title IX exemption in order to claim that exemption."

The guidance also adds that schools wishing to receive "assurance" of their religious exemptions can submit a written request to the USDA's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.

### *Administration backtracks after religious liberty lawsuit*

Earlier this month, CNA [reported](#) that Catholic schools who participate in the federally-funded NSLP were threatened by the Biden administration's revised rule.

At the time, a private Christian school in Tampa, Florida, had to file a [lawsuit](#) against the administration in order to secure a religious exemption from the rule, which could have forced the school to comply with policies on bathrooms, pronouns, hiring, and dress codes.

Represented by ADF, the school was granted an [exemption](#) by the state's agricultural department, restoring the funds for its school lunch program.

Erica Steinmiller-Perdomo, legal counsel at ADF, told CNA in an email that it took a lawsuit for the administration to backtrack on forcing religious schools to comply with its "radical push to redefine what it means to be male or female in federal law."

"After ADF's lawsuit, USDA made clear that they will automatically respect religious exemptions under Title IX for religious schools—for now," Steinmiller-Perdomo said.

"But public schools, charter schools, and secular private schools are not protected and remain under threat. Plus, other federal laws that lack religious exemptions may also

apply. As long as the Biden Administration seeks to redefine what it means to be male or female in all federal laws, religious schools risk being punished just for maintaining Christian beliefs,” she added.

Fifty-two percent of U.S. Catholic schools participate in the federal lunch program, according to the [National Catholic Educational Association](#).

### ***Archdiocese of St. Louis withdraws from NSLP***

Despite the USDA’s clarification, the Archdiocese of St. Louis released a private memo on Aug. 16 telling archdiocesan schools to drop out of the lunch program.

Brecht Mulvihill, the archdiocese’s executive director of communications, told CNA in an email that the archdiocese decided not to participate in both the NSLP and the similar USDA [Special Milk Program](#).

“As with any federal subsidy, schools that participate in these programs are subject to a wide variety of federal mandates, which could ultimately impact decisions concerning admissions, extracurricular activities, facilities, and logistics,” Mulvihill wrote, adding: “In some circumstances, these mandates would impede a school’s ability to faithfully carry out the teachings of the Catholic Church.”

There are around one dozen archdiocesan elementary and high schools that have participated in the programs in the past that will be affected.

“The Archdiocese of St. Louis is working to provide similar meal service or reduced-cost

Eddie Heipel

options on which our students and their families rely. In the meantime, there will be no interruption of these important services,” Mulvihill said.

When CNA asked if the USDA’s reinstatement of the broad religious exemption would change the archdiocese’s decision to withdraw from the program, Mulvihill responded that “accepting any federal subsidy would subject archdiocesan schools to federal mandates that could impede a school’s ability to faithfully carry out the teachings of the Catholic Church. Our decision to withdraw from these programs is not due to one specific rule, law, or mandate.”

A USDA official told CNA Aug. 30 that although the Title IX regulations apply to a “wide array” of schools, the law includes some exceptions, “including one permitting an institution to be exempt on religious grounds if there is a conflict between Title IX and a school’s governing religious tenets.”

The spokesperson said that “USDA regulations do not require a religious educational institution to submit a written request for a Title IX exemption in order to claim that exemption,” adding: “USDA’s recent guidance is meant to clarify this process.”

The official also said that the department works with all of its partners to “ensure that the applicable laws against discrimination are properly understood and implemented.”

“We do not tolerate discrimination of any kind,” the spokesperson added.

<https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2022/08/31/usda-exempts-religious-schools-from-lgbt-rule-change-threatening-free-lunch-funds/>

## Eritrean Authorities Seize Control of Catholic-Owned School, Set to Take Over Another

The government of Eritrea has taken over the [Hagaz Agro-Technical School](#) (HATS), a Catholic learning institution that the [Brothers of the Christian Schools](#) (LaSalle Brothers) established and have been running, an [August 24 BBC report](#) indicates.

In the BBC report, sources who maintained anonymity told BBC that [Don Bosco Technical School](#) in Dekemhare in Eritrea is “another Catholic-owned training college to be handed over to the government in September” this year.

The Hagaz Agro-Technical School “has been providing training in farm machinery, rearing of crops and animals, as well as soil conservation for the last 23 years,” the BBC report indicates.

The school is also known for producing Shalku wines, a drink made from grappa and jam. From its dairy cattle, it produces yoghurt and cheeses.

These latest seizures are part of the confiscations that have been going on in the Horn of Africa nation since 2019, the government citing a 1995 regulation that limited activities of religious institutions.

Catholic Bishops in Eritrea opposed the regulation, arguing that the Church’s social services are not in opposition to the government.

“The Church’s life is connected with the service of the people,” the August 24 BBC report quotes members of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Eritrea as having

stated in their letter to the Eritrean government.

The Church leaders who operate through the Eritrean Catholic Secretariat (ErCS) are reported to have repeatedly called on the government of Eritrea “to nurture an inclusive democracy and end authoritarian tactics”, the August 24 report indicates.

“Many analysts believe the latest seizures are a retaliation for the Catholic Church’s call for reforms in the one-party state,” BBC has reported.

The [Don Bosco](#) Technical School that the Eritrean government is set to confiscate next month is located in Dekemhare city, the second largest city in Eritrea after the capital Asmara.

The school offers training in the field of building construction, metalworking, automotive mechanics, machine tool mechanics, carpentry, furniture, electricity, electronics and technical expertise.

The school guarantees about 160 students a year to obtain a professional diploma that allows them to find work and hope for a future without having to “flee” from their own country.

The Eritrean government that has allowed the Catholic Church to operate alongside the Eritrean Orthodox, Evangelical Lutheran, and Sunni Islam regards other religious groups in the country as foreign entities, the BBC report indicates.

Silas Mwale Isenjia

<https://www.aciafrica.org/news/6556/eritrean-authorities-seize-control-of-catholic-owned-school-set-to-take-over-another>