

Catholic Education Foundation presents

THE CATHOLIC EDUCATOR



Volume 17 | Fall 2014

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A Word from Our Editor

As we are well on our way into the new academic year, I am happy to present the new issue of *The Catholic Educator*. My reflections this time around will “piggy-back” on three items included in this edition, as well as some thoughts on a very important book.

Cardus has just produced a new study on the effects of non-public education in North America, a follow-up to their 2011 study. The organization describes itself thus: “Cardus (root: *cardo*) is a think tank dedicated to the renewal of North American social architecture. Drawing on more than 2000 years of Christian social thought, we work to enrich and challenge public debate through research, events, and publications, for the common good.” I was happy to be present at the September 10 New York release of their latest contribution to serious research on such an important topic. In the question period, I asked a two-part question since the formal presentation offered some information that did not square with previous data I had seen, asserting that there was no (or very little) statistical difference in terms of religious allegiance between the students of Catholic schools and those of public schools. I noted that studies of U.S. Catholic schools consistently show a remarkable difference. So, I asked if it might not be important to separate out Canadian Catholic schools from their U.S. counterparts. The researcher agreed. The other point I questioned was the study’s finding that Evangelical schools do a better job of achieving what we might call student “loyalty” than Catholic schools. Actually, I didn’t question the finding as such but

observed that Catholic schools are more like “public” schools in that they are open to all, especially within the Catholic community, while there is a highly self-selective element when it comes to Evangelical parents who choose Christian schools for their children. That is, it is a rare “mediocre” Evangelical who opts for a Christian school experience for one’s children; rather, that parent is already deeply committed to the faith. In the Catholic scheme of things, to use the late Father Benedict Groeschel’s phrase, it’s an example of “Here comes everybody!” I shall return to the Cardus study shortly.

Within the past couple of months I have had the good fortune to meet and get to know Mark Bauerlein of *First Things*. The insightful professor and editor is also the author of a block-buster of a book, *The Dumbest Generation*, whose provocative title is explained by its sub-title: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future (Or, Don’t Trust Anyone Under 30). Having been in the “education business” since my teens (!), I have been able to monitor the downward spiral firsthand and with no small degree of sadness. For years now, I have refrained from assigning term papers even to graduate students because the writing is incomprehensible. A student at a state college told me last semester that Socrates was a Christian philosopher who lived in the Middle Ages. And just the other day, someone said that in a graduate education course, he was asked where “Electoral College” was located! We are in trouble, no? Of course, *The Closing of the American Mind* highlighted this three decades ago,



while the very prescient Jacques Maritain said this back in 1947, publishing his analysis as *Education at the Crossroads*. Catholic schools have been successful because they have resisted the pressure to “dumb down” and thus aid in the production of “the dumbest generation.” That resistance must continue.

This past month I have finally had the opportunity to review a monumental study, entitled *Lost Classroom, Lost Community*, by Margaret F. Brinig and Nicole Stelle Garnett and published by University of Chicago Press. In the simplest terms, the authors document—through rigorous research—how important Catholic schools are for the community-at-large. As a young seminarian, I served as vice-principal of an inner-city parish school in Trenton, New Jersey. More than one-third of our students were black Baptists. Why were they with us? A black Baptist minister put it succinctly: “The future of our community is in Blessed Sacrament School.” The authors demonstrate not only the highly effective nature of these schools in terms of giving youngsters a real crack at life; they also show how the school is the glue or cement to maintain a spark of civility in a neighborhood and, further, that when such a school closes, anyone who can moves out.

Finally, we include in this issue an address of Pope Francis to the Congregation for Catholic Education, wherein he stresses the critical importance of maintaining academic rigor, all the while maintaining and increasing Catholic identity, especially in this era of “accentuated cultural and religious pluralism.” The present Pope’s input on Catholic education is quite

welcome, precisely because he himself was a high school teacher for quite some time. Where does all of this lead us?

First of all, we need to learn a lesson from Catholic education to our north, namely, that we cannot allow the allure of governmental funding to move us toward secularization. Which is why—although a major proponent of programs like vouchers and tuition tax credits—I have always been adamantly opposed to any direct government monies flowing into our Catholic schools. Nothing is for nothing. Observers are almost unanimous in saying that most of Canada’s Catholic schools are virtually indistinguishable from the secular state schools—and that is proven in the study I cited at the outset, which fact also skewed the data for the Catholic schools of the United States. Secondly, James Cardinal Hickey of Washington was famous for his terse response to why the Church operates inner-city schools for largely non-Catholic populations: “We run those schools,” he declared, “not because *they* are Catholic but because *we* are!” Our schools offer hope to individual children and families, as well as to neighborhoods and cities. That said, because we are Catholic, we must also engage in the work of evangelization. If a Catholic school is not bringing non-Catholic students and families into the communion of the Church, something is seriously amiss in the educational project.

Last but not least, we must continue to keep the academic bar set high. Our standards—and achievements—have always been the highest, and we have no reason whatsoever to be tempted to imitate other failed educational systems, lest we throw in our lot with those who have been raising what the



convert poet-monk Thomas Merton dubbed
“a generation of hyenas.”

community of faith, just as we have been
doing since began operating schools
centuries ago.

The goal for this year—and for ever—is to
foster a community of learners in a

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



Pope Francis' Address to the Congregation for Catholic Education

Vatican City, February 13, 2014 (Zenit.org)

Here is a translation of Francis' address today to the plenary session of the Congregation for Catholic Education (of Seminaries and Institutes of Study).

* * *

Lord Cardinals,

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and the Priesthood,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I give a particular welcome to the Cardinals and Bishops recently appointed Members of this Congregation, and I thank the Cardinal Prefect for the words with which he introduced this meeting.

The topics you have in the order of the day are exacting, such as the updating of the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana*, the consolidation of the identity of Catholic Universities and the preparation of the anniversaries that will fall in 2015, namely, the 50th of the Conciliar Declaration *Gravissimum Educationis* and the 25th of the Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Catholic education is one of the most important challenges of the Church, committed today to carrying out the New Evangelization in an historical and cultural context in constant transformation. In this perspective, I would like to call your attention to three aspects.

The first aspect regards *the value of dialogue in education*. Recently, you developed the topic of education to inter-cultural dialogue in the Catholic school, with the publication of a specific document. In fact, Catholic schools and Universities are

frequented by many non-Christian students and even by non-believers. The Catholic educational institutions offer to all an educational proposal that looks to the integral development of the person and that responds to the right of all to accede to learning and knowledge. However, all equally are called to offer—with full respect of each one's liberty and of the methods proper to the school environment—the Christian proposal, namely Jesus Christ as the meaning of life, of the cosmos and of history.

Jesus began to proclaim the Good News in “Galilee of the Gentiles,” a crossroads of persons of different race, culture and religion. Such a context is similar in certain ways to today's world. The profound changes that have led to the ever greater diffusion of multi-cultural societies ask all those who operate in the school and University sector to involve themselves in educational itineraries of encounter and dialogue, with courageous and innovative fidelity which will be able to make the Catholic identity meet with the different “spirits” of the multi-cultural society. I am thinking with appreciation of the contribution that the Religious Institutes and other ecclesial institutions offer with the foundation and running of Catholic schools in contexts of accentuated cultural and religious pluralism.

The second aspect regards *the qualified preparation of the formators*. We cannot improvise. We must engage seriously. In the meeting I had with the General Superiors, I stressed that today education is addressed to a generation that *changes*; therefore, every educator—and the whole Church which is



Mother Educator—is called to “*change*,” in the sense of being able to communicate with the young people she has before her.

I would like to limit myself to recall the guidelines of the figure of the educator and of his specific task. To educate is an act of love, it is to give life. And love is demanding, it calls for using the best resources, for awakening passion and to begin with patience together with young people. The educator in Catholic schools must be, first of all, very competent, qualified and, at the same time, rich in humanity, capable of being in the midst of young people with a pedagogical style, to promote their human and spiritual growth. Young people are in need of quality teaching, together with values not just enunciated but witnessed. Coherence is an indispensable factor in the education of young people. Coherence! We cannot make them grow, we cannot educate them without coherence: coherence, witness.

Because of this, the educator himself is in need of permanent formation. Therefore, it is necessary to invest, so that docents and directors can keep high their professionalism and also their faith and the strength of their spiritual motivations. And in this permanent formation I also allow myself to suggest the need for retreats and Spiritual Exercises for educators. It is good to have courses in this and that argument, but it is also necessary to have courses of Spiritual Exercises, retreats, to pray!—because coherence is an effort, but above all it is a gift and a grace. And we must ask for it!

A last aspect concerns the *educational institutions*, that is, the Catholic and ecclesial schools and Universities. The 50th anniversary of the Conciliar Declaration, and the 25th of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and the updating of *Sapientia Christiana* induce us to reflect seriously on the numerous

formative institutions spread throughout the world and on their responsibility to express a living presence of the Gospel in the field of education, of science and of culture. Catholic academic institutions must not be isolated from the world; they must be able to enter with courage in the Areopagus of present-day cultures and engage in dialogue, aware of the gift they have to offer everyone.

Beloved, the issue of education is a great open yard, in which the Church has always been present with her own institutions and projects. Today it is necessary to boost this commitment at all levels and to renew the task of all the subjects committed to you in the perspective of the New Evangelization. In this horizon I thank you for all your work and, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, I invoke the constant assistance of the Holy Spirit upon you and your initiatives. I ask you, please, to pray for me and for my ministry, and I bless you from my heart. Thank you!

[Original text: Italian]

[Translation by Zenit]



Stewardship Education at Middle Creek Christian Retreat

Fairfield, Pennsylvania, near Gettysburg

Middle Creek Christian Retreat introduces a new Stewardship Education program for middle and high school students beginning in January 2014. The curriculum is centered on principles of Biblical stewardship, designed to teach basic ecological ideas through a curriculum based on the following:

- Standard sampling techniques for aquatic organisms (invertebrates, amphibians, and fish).
- Basic water chemistry (using Hach kits).
- Vegetation surveys (using standard forest protocols for species composition and volume estimate per unit area).
- Herbaceous vegetation (using permanent fixed plots and plot-less survey techniques).

Participants will make use of standard wildlife survey techniques (including cameras) for monitoring deer populations as well as other mammals. This curriculum also employs active restoration of the landscape at Middle Creek to demonstrate our role in caring for God's earth.

Aquatic Resources

- *Retention Pond*—excellent for frogs, emergent vegetation, painted turtles, potential for garter snakes; excellent for invertebrates, crayfish, potential small fish, adjacent wetlands.

Forest Resources

- *Oak-Hickory forest* with white oak, red oak, pin oak, black walnut, Maryland oak, hickory species, muscle wood, hawthorn, witch hazel, and a variety of other shrubs.

Other Ecological Resources

- *Trail system* connecting these resources with access along stream.
- *Ephemeral pools*—excellent potential for construction of ephemeral pools for salamanders via creation of shallow basins with clay liners along hiking trail.
- Sheet metal roof sheets from old coop at farmstead to serve as reptile habitat placed throughout forests. Also strategically located brush piles along trails for reptile and rodent habitat. Mulch piles and sand areas along edges of forest for nesting habitats for reptiles.
- Deer exclusion areas (fenced) for comparison with un-enclosed areas to measure how deer affect existing forests and future restored forest plots.

Sample Lesson Plans (3-day/2-night package)

■ *Day 1- Arrival, hike to meet the creatures of Middle Creek*

- Introduction—Hike to forests, creek, adjacent wetlands and looking for signs of wildlife. Check and set up wildlife cameras. *Introduce idea of*



ecological productivity based on pyramids of biomass and numbers with initial energy fixed by sun and loss of energy with each level of the chain from primary producers, to primary consumers, secondary consumers, and detritivores.

- Noon Devotional—Psalm 124: The Earth Is the Lord's.
- Afternoon—*Forest Ecology and Diversity*—Measuring and identifying forest trees. Data tabulation. Comparison of deer excluded and un-excluded plots.
- Late afternoon—*Edible and Medicinal Plants*—the garden of eaten.
- Dinner Devotional—Trees and the Bible.
- Evening Activity—*Judging Whitetail Deer* and population demography from photos. Dusk hike and shining for wildlife along trails.

■ Day 2- Aquatic Resources

- Morning Devotion—Christ the Living Water and Biblical Images of Water.
- Morning Lessons—*Aquatic Productivity and Ponds*—examination of pond water, basic water chemistry.
- Lunch Devotional—All Creatures of Our God and King (based around hymn by Francis of Assisi and The Doxology).
- Afternoon—*Aquatic Macro-invertebrates*, their ecology and watersheds, basic stream chemistry.

- Evening—*Predator-Prey and People*—ecology of God's creatures from dentition, plus tracks and pelts.
- Activities—predator prey tag and Kim's Game with groups for tracks, skulls, pelts.

■ Day 3- Thy Kingdom Come

- Morning Devotional—Colossians 1:15-20.
- *Restoration Ecology* in context of watersheds—connecting the stream and the Chesapeake Bay to the forest.
- Activity—planting restoration plots (seasonally appropriate), creating vernal ponds, restoring aquatic vegetation, creation of animal habitat (brush piles etc.), exotic species control. These will all be outlined. Groups may choose from seasonally appropriate activities.
- Lunch Devotional—Thy Kingdom Come (based on the Lord's Prayer).
- After lunch—wrap-up and review with integration of pictures of kids during activities and from the wildlife cameras.
- Closing Devotional—caring for God's World as a Witness for Christ.

Contact Kathy Coley at [301-770-5338](tel:301-770-5338) or kccoley@aol.com to discuss prices for packages led by your own staff or our staff. Package includes two nights' lodging at the Manor or Laney Lodge and six meals.



Taking Stewardship of Catholic Schools

One of the joys I've had over the past few years has been traveling to various dioceses to preach retreats and facilitate convocations for fellow priests. Such occasions expose me quite a bit to how similar things are handled from place to place.

While much of what pastors do stays the same wherever they minister, one of the largest areas of disparity among dioceses concern the administrative and financial responsibilities of parishes that priests must oversee.

Many of the differences I discover leave me saying, "Thank God I'm a priest of the Diocese of Fall River!"

But in a few areas I can't help but say to myself, "We should be doing that, too!"

One of the most conspicuous areas is with regard to Catholic education, something that I've been thinking about quite a bit during Catholic Schools Week.

A few years ago I was in the Diocese of Wichita, which is teeming with vocations to the priesthood and religious life and features top notch programs for high schoolers, collegians, and young adults that solicit huge and enthusiastic responses.

In talking with priests about their diocese's remarkable vitality, they told me, "It all begins with our Catholic schools."

Throughout the Diocese of Wichita, Catholic education is free. No Catholic youngster needs to pay a penny to attend any of the 38 elementary schools and four high schools. It's funded entirely by the generosity of parishioners through the Sunday offertory. Wichita, by the way, isn't exactly Newport or Greenwich in terms

of *per capita* income. The clergy and faithful of Wichita, however, have made an enormous commitment to Catholic education.

All Catholics are asked to tithe a percentage of their income in order to make it possible for every young Catholic, rich or poor, to receive a Catholic education. The vast majority of Catholics make that sacrifice in order to pass on the faith to the younger generations, including to burgeoning numbers of impoverished Hispanic immigrants. Parishes with schools often spend 80 to 90 percent of their budget to make Catholic education free, accessible and excellent. Parishes without schools commit to paying the entire tuition of their young parishioners to attend nearby Catholic schools. Churches in particularly poor areas get help from a Diocesan St. Katherine Drexel Fund, to help them meet their budgets beyond what their parishioners can sacrifice.

Since all Catholics are sacrificing for Catholic schools, even if they no longer have any children or grandchildren attending, many are willing to volunteer in schools to save money to use it for programs, facilities and salaries. The massive investment also keeps Catholic identity in the schools robust. In order to be able to attend the schools for free, Catholic families need to be committed and active stewards in their parish. Non-Catholics who accept the strong Catholic identity of the school are welcome to attend, with their families' paying a tuition that is slightly below per pupil costs.

It's a model of how Catholics in a diocese prioritize Catholic education and form disciples for the future.



In various other dioceses I've visited, while Catholic education isn't free, every parish without a school is assessed a major percentage of the offertory—often 25 to 40 percent—to subsidize Catholic schools elsewhere in the Diocese, something that keeps tuitions affordable, pays just salaries, funds fund capital improvements and the building of new schools. It also means that every parish is necessarily highly invested in forming the next generation of believers. For that reason, the gift of a Catholic education is regularly promoted at all parishes, facilitating a culture in which all Catholic families are urged to take advantage of an affordable, excellent Catholic education for their children.

In our Diocese, the only parishes that are similarly invested in Catholic education are those that still have parish elementary schools attached to them, which are less than a quarter of our Diocese's parishes. Regional schools administered by the Diocese or the five Catholic High Schools receive no direct funding from parishes.

The only regular commitment those parishes without schools are required to make is to give a \$300 annual subsidy to students from the parish who are attending one of the 19 Catholic elementary schools. Several parishes do more than what is required, and some also offer financial assistance for students to attend one of five Catholic high schools, but all of this is paltry compared to what happens in those dioceses where parishes without schools give massive chunks of their offertory to support Catholic education.

The St. Mary's Education Fund that our Diocese has established is a great help to families in financial need to receive partial

scholarships to attend Catholic schools—and indirectly assists schools by increasing student enrollment—but it's nowhere near enough to remedy the fundamental economic problems facing most parochial schools.

Adopting a parish offertory model of support for Catholic Schools here would likely create short-term financial distress for parishes already struggling to meet budgets. But there are ways that all Catholics, including those in parishes without schools and without relatives in schools, could support Catholic schools without harming parish bottom lines.

The first would be to have a diocesan-wide second collection once or twice a year to support Catholic Schools in the Diocese.

A second would be to do a campaign similar to the Catholic Charities Appeal (CCA) specifically to support Catholic education. Just like the CCA helps everyone grasp how much need there is for the excellent spiritual and social services that the CCA funds, so a similar campaign for Catholic education would not only provide necessary financial support for the Catholic schools, but it would also dramatically increase awareness of the indispensable importance of Catholic schools among all Catholics.

The inescapable reality is that the future of the Catholic Church in our country is highly dependent on the prevalence and quality of Catholic schools today and tomorrow. That's why all Catholics and all Catholic parishes need to be urged to take genuine stewardship of them. As Catholic schools go, so goes the Church.

Fr. Roger Landry
The Anchor



Pope Francis Recalled Fondly His Childhood School, Praised ‘Catholic Culture’

“School life was a ‘whole’... The most natural thing was to go to Mass in the morning, as well as having breakfast, studying, going to lessons, playing during recreation, hearing the ‘Good night’ of the Father Director.”

In a 1990 letter written by the future Pope Francis and republished on [ZENIT](#), then-Father Jorge Mario Bergoglio recalls fondly the “Catholic culture” that he experienced at age 13 in a Catholic school run by the Salesian Fathers.

Pope Francis writes that the Wilfrid Baron School of the Holy Angels in Ramos Mejia, Buenos Aires, prepared him “for life.” He remembers the night that one of the Fathers discussed the importance of praying to the Blessed Virgin Mary to know his vocation. After that, he never went to bed without praying.

The letter also recalls the night when one of the Fathers spoke to students about the death of his mother. Afterward, Pope Francis thought of death as something “natural” and not to fear.

The Holy Father writes that he grew in a love of purity and willingness to sacrifice, and he learned various hobbies and crafts. He was even instilled with a respect and love for the Pope!

Reflecting on what it was like to attend the school, Pope Francis describes its “Catholic culture”:

School life was a “whole.” I was immersed in a way of life prepared

so that there wouldn’t be time to be lazy. The day passed as an arrow without time for one to be bored. I felt myself submerged in a world that, although prepared “artificially” (with pedagogic resources), had nothing artificial about it. The most natural thing was to go to Mass in the morning, as well as having breakfast, studying, going to lessons, playing during recreation, hearing the “Good night” of the Father Director. Each one was made to live different assembled aspects of life, and this created *a conscience* in me: not only a moral conscience but a sort of human conscience (social, ludic, artistic, etc.). Said differently: the School created, through the awakening of the conscience in the truth of things, *a Catholic culture* that was not at all “bigoted” or “disoriented.”

Pope Francis attributes the “Catholic culture” of the school to the “faith” of the Salesians who ran the institution. He said that they “believed in Jesus Christ” and had the “courage to ‘preach’: with the word, with their life, with their work.”

“Everything was done with a meaning,” the Holy Father writes. “I learned there, almost unwittingly, to seek the meaning of things I learned to study in the School. The hours of study, in silence, created a habit of concentration, of a quite strong control of dispersion.”

“Never (in so far as I remember) was a truth negotiated,” he continued. “One could then



play the rebel, the atheist... but imprinted deep down was the sense of sin: a truth that could not be thrown out, to make everything easier.”

Later on in life, Pope Francis heard that the Salesian Fathers were leaving some schools in the hands of the laity, partly because of a lack of vocations but also because the young Salesians were not attracted to teaching. Pope Francis asked himself in response: “[W]hen a work languishes and loses its flavor and its capacity to leaven the dough, is it not rather because Jesus Christ has been substituted by other options: psychological, sociological, pastoral?”

Catholic schools today can create a “Catholic culture” similar to what Pope Francis experienced at age 13, he believes. He writes: “[T]he Salesian cultural patrimony of 1949, this pedagogic patrimony, is capable of creating in its pupils a Catholic culture also in 1990, as it was able to create it in 1930.”

Kelly Conroy
February 5, 2014
Catholic Education Daily



Rural School Embraces Classical Education, Catholic Identity

Sterling, Colo., Feb 4, 2014 ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).—A Catholic grade school on Colorado's eastern plains is working to adopt a classical curriculum, in the hopes of revitalizing the school community and providing a well-rounded formation for its students.

“We decided we needed to re-explore our Catholic roots in education,” said Joseph Skerjanec, principal of St. Anthony Catholic School in Sterling, Colo.

“We've always distinguished ourselves by our faith, but also academically, we thought this was the best thing: to get back to the Catholic intellectual tradition,” he explained to CNA Jan. 30.

“The purpose of education ultimately is to get to heaven, and we feel this is the best route for us to do that.”

After serving the families of northeastern Colorado for 95 years, St. Anthony's nearly had to close this academic year, but was saved through a successful fundraising campaign.

Skerjanec, together with the faculty and the parish, realized that embracing a classical curriculum might help the school to continue to serve students into the future, by offering “virtue education ... and exposing our kids to those people who we need to be modeling our lives after.”

Classical, or liberal arts, education is meant to help students learn how to think, giving them the tools of learning rather than merely

teaching them “subjects.” The foundation of classical education is a set of three methods of learning subjects, called the trivium—grammar, logic and rhetoric.

Skerjanec noted that there is a trend of Catholic schools “moving toward classical education ... I think you'll find a lot of schools doing this.”

He added that Andrew Seeley, a professor at Thomas Aquinas College in California and director of the Institute for Catholic Liberal Education, has trained the school's staff in the methods of teaching classically.

“The students themselves love it, and I do too. It's been a wonderful experience, very rejuvenating ... in a lot of ways it's not new; it's just rediscovering who we are.”

The principal explained that “we spend a lot of our teachers' meetings exploring writings, documents about it, then talking about how it can be implemented,” and “it's been very good for us.”

“It's slowly being implemented,” he noted. “We decided to start with social studies and literature, because that's where a lot of the 'meat' of classical education exists.”

St. Anthony's was introduced to classical education after the son of parish deacon Ron Michieli returned from a classical college and started leading groups in the community. This inspired Deacon Michieli to share the idea with St. Anthony's pastor and with Skerjanec.



“It just feels right,” Skerjanec reflected. “I spent 15 years in public education, and it just always felt like there was something else, something more; and when I finally realized that getting back to the Catholic intellectual tradition was where it was at, it was like a light bulb going off for me.”

Abbey Daly, a new teacher at the school who received a classical education at Wyoming Catholic College, said she has “discovered the importance of memorization” for her middle school classes at St. Anthony's, where she teaches literature, history, logic, Latin and grammar.

“That's been the most enjoyable thing for me: helping the kids in class memorize poetry, Latin forms, presidents, states,” she told CNA. Memorization is an important part of classical education, particularly for younger students, helping to develop intellectual virtues.

Daly explained the importance of classical education “not as a means of getting ahead in life, but as simply a way of being happy no matter what you do in life – farming, or driving a truck, or being a lawyer, whatever God is calling you to be. Latin, learning history this way, learning philosophy and logic, are helpful no matter what God is calling you to do.”

Skerjanec said the school has been explaining its new classical curriculum to parents and parishioners, and hopes to boost enrollment in future years, especially by reaching out to communities around Sterling.

St. Anthony's is the only Catholic school on Colorado's eastern plains among the three

dioceses serving the area. The nearest Catholic school is in Greeley, more than 90 miles away.

“No matter where you live, you should have the opportunity to send your kids to a Catholic school, whether it's in a busy place like the Front Range, or out here on the plains with a rural setting,” the principal said.

St. Anthony's “doesn't turn anyone away,” he noted, adding that this is what makes the school's financial planning so important: “we don't want to turn anyone away. Anyone who wants a Catholic education should get one.”

He called it a “blessing” that “while we see so many Catholic schools closing, we're still here, and our community still supports us.”

To stay open for the 2014-15 academic year, St. Anthony's set a goal of raising \$600,000 last year. The school ended up raising \$1.1 million.

“It truly solidifies the point that our community supports us,” Skerjanec said. “They think it's important that we're here, and we just need to get the word out to regenerate that support; but we cannot thank our benefactors enough for what they've done for us.”

“People from all over have supported us ... we're very, very blessed and very thankful, and very humbled by it.”

Carl Bunderson



Catholic Schools and the New Evangelization: 'A Most Valuable Resource'

Dublin, February 20, 2014 ([Zenit.org](http://zenit.org))

Here is an address from Archbishop Eamon Martin, coadjutor archbishop of Armagh, given today at the Edmund Rice Schools Trustees (NI) Annual Foundation Lecture.

"We need a bigger beach" ran a newspaper headline last July on the morning after World Youth Day 2013. It was an amazing sight—two and half miles of Rio's Copacabana beach crammed with three million young Catholics from all over the world, including Ireland.

Pope Francis left the young people in no doubt that they have an important role to play in the New Evangelisation. 'The Lord needs you for His Church', he told them. Unapologetically, he called them to be missionaries. 'Be active members of the Church', he said, 'go on the offensive... build a better world of justice, of love, of peace, of fraternity, of solidarity'. 'Don't leave it to others', he said. 'Don't be observers of life'. 'Get involved'. 'Be protagonists of change'. At the final Mass he said that the best tool for evangelising the young is another young person and he challenged them: 'Do not be afraid to go and bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away, most indifferent'.

It's impossible to talk about 'Catholic Schools and the New Evangelisation' without first being aware of the Holy Father's challenge to young people. A few weeks ago we celebrated Catholic Schools Week, acknowledging that our schools are distinctive—they are not only centres of

excellence and learning, but they are also places of faith. So, if the Holy Father is calling on our young people to be agents of the new evangelisation, it is important to ask ourselves: to what extent do we, in our Catholic schools, facilitate young people in grasping the truths of faith, growing in love of God and neighbour, and in becoming witnesses for Christ?

I am aware, of course, that this is a sensitive topic, controversial even. Some question the role of the school in helping a young person deepen her or his faith. Is that not primarily the responsibility of their parent or their parish? And if the Catholic school does have a part to play, then have we the necessary resources and formation in place to make that possible?

Pope Francis has no doubt that Catholic schools are vital to the New Evangelisation. Just before Christmas he published the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, (The Gospel of Joy) in response to the XIII Synod of Bishops on The New Evangelisation. In 'The Gospel of Joy' he says:

'Catholic schools, which always strive to join their work of education with the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, are a most valuable resource for the evangelization of culture' (*EG*, 134).

His words are reminiscent of those of his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI. Speaking to US bishops on an *ad limina* visit in 2012, he described Catholic schools as 'an essential resource to the new evangelisation', whose task is not just to pass on



intellectual knowledge, but also to 'shape the hearts' of young people.

But how might Catholic schools take their place in the New Evangelisation? And what challenges does the Pope's mandate present? Tonight I would like to reflect on three particular issues: firstly, the New Context in which our Catholic schools are working; secondly, what is this New Mission that is being given to us?; and thirdly, I offer my thoughts on some 'New' Partnerships to assist our schools in taking up the challenge.

1. A New Context

Last Monday evening I had the privilege of returning to my *alma mater*, Saint Columb's College in Derry, to speak to several hundred senior pupils from the Catholic post-primary schools in Derry. Standing in the Assembly Hall of my old school, I couldn't help thinking back 35 years to the time when I had been an Upper Sixth student. It is difficult to comprehend the magnitude of the changes that have taken place since then—in education, the Church and society. The world is now a very different place.

The past twenty years have seen a steep decline in weekly practice and prayer amongst Catholics here. Ireland shares with other parts of Western Europe a certain loss of the 'sense of the sacred', increasing individualism and disengagement from community, and a tendency towards ethical relativism. Schools and their pupils are not immune. Teachers and parents struggle to compete with all the contradictory messages which contemporary culture hurls at our young people - the cult of the celebrity, binge drinking and drugs and pornography. Ironically, the digital communications revolution has brought with it a certain breakdown in real and meaningful communication and friendships. Perhaps the

most saddening feature of recent years is the prevalence of depression amongst the young, and the creeping despair and emptiness which has tragically taken the lives of too many of our young people through suicide.

In Ireland as elsewhere, the gradual drift of people away from Mass and the sacraments has grown stronger and increasingly we are finding people who live their lives with little or no reference to belief or trust in God. A considerable number of baptised Catholics in Ireland are in need of what Pope John Paul II termed the 'new evangelisation', finding themselves at a remove from Christ and the church and having 'lost a living sense of the faith' (*RM 33*). There is also no doubt that the dark cloud of abuse, with all its shame and scandal, has, as Pope Benedict put it (*Letter to the Catholics of Ireland 2010*), 'obscured the light of the gospel'. It has not only brought such tragic consequences for victims and their families, but has also undermined trust among some parents in the involvement of the Church in our schools and other educational establishments.

The new context shows itself in various ways. It is not uncommon for Primary School teachers to notice that some children starting school have not yet been introduced to Jesus and have little or no foundation in prayer. And even when the school does its best to prepare and create an environment of prayer and practice, in many cases pupils are not brought to the sacraments outside of school. More teachers nowadays are finding themselves quite literally '*in loco parentis*' as the first teachers of these children in the ways of faith.

With the decline in family prayer, and in a culture of faith in many homes, perhaps some parents simply lack the confidence to



teach their children about God, or how to talk to Jesus as their loving friend. Others, because of their particular life circumstances, may feel disaffected or even excluded from the family of the Church. On the other hand, there are many young parents, who consider it as a great privilege and responsibility to hand on the faith to their children—recently a young couple told me they have both come back to God and the practice of their faith following a pre-baptism course in their parish. And I should mention the importance of the vocation of grandparents in supporting their children and grandchildren in coming to know God—the Catholic Grandparents Association is already making a tremendous contribution to the New Evangelisation.

As I said, schools are not immune from the influences I have been speaking about. Often teachers will express their personal lack of confidence when it comes to witnessing to their faith in any kind of public manner. In some cases they too may have fallen away from regular practice of their faith, or perhaps they have had insufficient support or mature formation in knowing and understanding the truths of the Catholic faith. For whatever reason, they may feel uncomfortable in leading prayer, or talking to their pupils about faith matters—especially in an age when young people are well able to put you 'on the spot' over a tricky moral dilemma or about some aspect of the Church's teaching. Our schools are also becoming increasingly diverse with pupils and teachers from a wide variety of cultural, religious or non-religious backgrounds.

Last weekend, Pope Francis, speaking to the plenary session of the Congregation for Catholic Education, pointed to the multicultural environment of Catholic schools and universities, where many

students are not Christian or do not believe. He reminded us that Catholic education has, as its aim, not only the full development of every person, but also the desire 'to present Jesus Christ as the meaning of life, the cosmos and history'. He said the new context of dialogue and encounter in which we find ourselves is not unlike that in which Jesus began to proclaim the Good News—a 'Galilee of the nations', a crossroads' of people, diverse in terms of race, culture and religion'. Here, our Catholic schools are called to maintain what Pope Francis calls 'a courageous and innovative fidelity that enables Catholic identity to encounter the various 'souls' of multicultural society'.

Having spoken about the New Context in which Catholic schools are finding themselves, let me consider now some aspects of the New Mission that awaits them.

2. New Mission

Pope Francis 'never tires' of repeating these words of his predecessor Pope Benedict: "Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction".

Surely this is the key mission which unites us as parents, teachers, priests—to help our young people find a personal relationship with Jesus within the communion of the Church. At times we can present our faith as if it were simply a collection of guidelines, rules, rituals and routines, symbols, structures and historical characters. Of course it includes all of these. But if we reduce it to these entirely and neglect the 'spark of faith' and that personal encounter with the love of God in Jesus, then we will end up with something 'worn out' and joyless.



Pope Francis makes no apologies for putting the 'joy' back into the vocabulary of our faith. In *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Gospel of Joy) he mocks our tendency towards 'joyless' Christianity. An evangeliser, he says, must never be 'self-absorbed' or gloomy, looking like 'someone who has just come back from a funeral'. (EG, 10) He has no time for 'defeatism' which turns us into 'disillusioned pessimists' - or "sourpusses" as he calls them. He insists: 'Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the joy of evangelisation'; 'let us not allow ourselves to be or 'robbed of hope' (EG, 83).

Instead, Pope Francis challenges us to get out there to bring faith to life. He says (EG): 'I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.... If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life'.

I find these words exciting, but also quite disturbing of my own 'comfort zone'. When I look at my own life, I wonder how much do I keep Jesus locked up inside myself? Because at the heart of the message of Pope Francis is the radical call of Jesus to go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News.

I would like to suggest three particular ways by which our Catholic schools might respond to this challenge:

a. Instill confidence in pupils and teachers to be public witnesses for our faith.

b. Let God's presence in His Word and the Eucharist transform our schools from within.

c. Reach out to the poor and tackle inequality.

a. Confidence to be witnesses

The Gospel readings these Sundays, drawn from the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7), leave us in no doubt that we are all called to be 'witnesses' for our faith. Jesus says: 'You are salt for the earth; You are light for the world'. Tasteless salt or hidden lights are worthless and should be thrown out.

It is difficult, of course, to be public witnesses for Christ nowadays, particularly in schools. Perhaps it's because pupils or teachers don't want to come across as pious or 'holier than thou' in front of friends and colleagues; or, because they are conscious of their own personal weaknesses and sinfulness? Or is it that they do not have the maturity of language or vocabulary in order to communicate the truth of the Gospel message in a sometimes aggressively secular world? To be a witness to Christ nowadays is becoming increasingly counter-cultural. More and more, faith-based opinions are being given the 'cold shoulder' in the public square.

How many of us have not found ourselves floundering at times to understand and articulate Gospel values and Catholic teachings about life, love, the family, charity, a fair distribution of wealth, mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation?

If we wish to become witnesses for Christ today, we have to be able to draw upon both reason and faith in order to express our vision of the dignity and vocation of the human person, linked to the common good. All the more reason, then, for our Catholic education system, from infancy to young



adulthood, to play its part in providing a progressive catechesis, one which gradually and systematically helps pupils and teachers to grasp and present the essential content of our rich Catholic tradition and doctrine.

All Catholic schools, with the help of their Diocesan Advisor, might usefully examine their ethos and curriculum in order to evaluate the contribution they are making to pupils' knowledge and understanding of salvation history and of the four so-called 'pillars' of the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

1) What we believe (the creed); 2) how we celebrate (liturgy and the sacraments); 3) how we live (Christian morality); 4) how we pray (Christian prayer).

Because of the many influences on them, not least in the digital media, young people are often left without moral reference points and are easily swayed by ethical relativism, or by a comfortable 'spirituality without challenge'. Sadly, as one young R.E. teacher told me recently: More young people are tempted towards a kind of 'nihilism', viewing life as basically meaningless.

Our Catholic schools have a vital role to play in developing a 'creative apologetics' (EG, 132) which will help our young people to present and explain to their world a 'consistent ethic of life', and, as the first letter of Peter puts it: "a reason for the hope that is within us" (1 Pet 3:15). We must aim to send our pupils out 'in the service of love', emboldened with the Gospel of Joy, to change the world. We must help and encourage them to say a resounding 'Yes' to a culture of Life and 'No' to the creeping culture of death and destruction.

In all this we must remember, as Pope Francis says, 'on the lips of the catechist, the first proclamation (of the Gospel) must ring

out over and over: 'Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you' (EG, 164)

b. Let God's presence in His Word and the Eucharist transform our schools from within

And that brings me to the second feature of the New Mission for our Catholic schools, to let God's presence in His Word and the Eucharist transform our schools from within.

Obviously this means finding more opportunities in Catholic schools for pupils to hear or read God's Word, and then to reflect on what it is asking of them. The Word of God is the 'wellspring of renewal' in the life of the Church and in our own personal lives (*Verbum Domini*). But if this is to happen, then we need to make the Bible a more natural part of the daily life of our schools.

St Jerome once said: Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ, so let us seek new opportunities in our Catholic schools for teachers and pupils to meet together to read and study the Bible, to reflect upon it prayerfully, to get to know who Jesus is, His life and ministry and relate it to their lives. e.g. in Assemblies, Bible Study Groups and *Lectio Divina* groups. Pope Francis describes the Word of God as a 'sublime treasure'. He says 'the study of the Sacred Scriptures must be a door opened to every believer'; evangelisation demands familiarity with the Word of God. You may be aware of the website, 'Sacred Space' which is hosted here in Ireland. In a few clicks it offers opportunities for a few moments of prayer and meditation for each day, drawing from God's Word, offering thoughts on how that Word relates to daily life. Something like this would be the ideal beginning to



every day for pupils, teachers and school chaplains.

God's powerful presence in the Eucharist is another source of nourishment for our Catholic schools. Most of our schools already make a big effort to ensure that school, class and Year Group Masses are celebrated regularly with joy and reverence. Pope John Paul II, who invented the term 'New Evangelisation' was always clear that there is no authentic celebration of the Eucharist that does not lead to mission. The Eucharist is the summit and source of the Church's life and mission. Regular celebration of the Eucharist, as well as opportunities for young people to meet God in adoration and prayer before the Eucharist can bring new hope, enthusiasm and renewal into the life of a school.

A few weeks ago during Catholic Schools Week, I attended a wonderful liturgical celebration with 800 children from all over Dundalk. Towards the end of their hour-long celebration of joyful prayer and song, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, and the children were led in a meditation and silent adoration, before ending with Benediction—it was deeply moving to see 800 children praying intensely in silence before Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Pope Benedict once said: 'Eucharistic spirituality must be the interior motor of every activity'. (Homily at Conclusion of the Year of the Eucharist, 23 October 2005). Might all our Catholic schools harness this power in driving the New Evangelisation?

c. Reach out to the poor and tackle inequality

The third aspect of the New Mission flows from Word and Eucharist and from the desire to be a public witness to Christ - it is one which Pope Francis mentions almost

every day: Reach out to the poor and tackle inequality.

The problem of world poverty remains a huge challenge for all of us. The recent observation by Oxfam that the 85 richest people in the world earn more than 3.5 billion of the world's poorest people stopped many of us in our tracks. Apparently one third of all the food bought in Ireland is thrown out—and worldwide there are 1.3 billion tons of food waste every year. Pope Francis refers to the 'scandal of global hunger' and says 'we cannot look the other way and pretend that global hunger does not exist'. 'We must try to give a voice to those who suffer silently from hunger so that this voice becomes a roar which can shake the world'.

The disturbing thing about this challenge is how easy it is for us at home, school and parish, to become comfortable with our share of the world's material goods, and even to get caught into the pursuit of more riches and pleasure, oblivious to those in the world who are much less fortunate than we are. It is true that Ireland remains one of the most generous countries in the world when it comes to supporting development aid and our schools raise large amounts for charity. The 5 million euro raised by Trócaire before Christmas for Syria and the Philippines was an extraordinary act of generosity and solidarity.

But I think that Pope Francis is reminding us that solidarity with the poor is about more than giving from what we have left over. He is calling us to examine our whole lives, our mindset, our personal attitudes to money and possessions. And these are issues which our Catholic schools must present to our young people who are so easily caught up in the materialism that surrounds them. Where do we find fulfilment in our lives? Is it in the



material things that we own, or is it in becoming a more rounded and generous person who is deeply conscious of the impact of our lifestyle on the earth and on the poorest peoples who share this planet with us? Pope Francis is asking us to confront our worldliness, that 'throwaway culture' which reduces everyone and everything to consumers or units of consumption; he invites us to be permanently 'tuned in' to hearing the cry of the poor, the excluded, the marginalised, the forgotten. Indeed he goes further, he asks us to go out to the peripheries, to meet the poor and excluded where they are.

I applaud those Catholic schools that organise outreach programmes for their pupils, who have established youth branches of St Vincent de Paul Society, who organise trips to Lourdes as helpers of the sick, educational visits to orphanages in Romania, or to mission countries like Kenya or Uganda. These experiences can have a profound, lifelong impact on our young people and on the teachers who accompany them. Development education and Catholic social teaching ought to be a compulsory part of the curriculum in all Catholic schools so that teachers and young people can be aware of issues such as solidarity, fair distribution of the world's goods, and about the impact of poverty on the dignity of the human person. If we are to meet the challenges of the New Evangelisation, Catholic social teaching must not remain, as some say, the Church's best kept secret! Trócaire's website has some excellent resources. By way of introduction for teachers and principals, I recommend Donal Dorr's classic text: *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*—which traces the development of the key principles of Catholic social teaching over more than a century.

In this regard, within our Catholic education system as a whole, we must continue to look out for those who are left behind or neglected in any way. The holy founders and foundresses of many of our Catholic schools, like Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice or Venerable Nano Nagle were clearly inspired by a preferential option for the poor. We must examine the inequalities in our system with its widening gap between the highest and lowest achievers, where too many of our young people leave without meaningful qualifications or opportunities, where the responsibility for children from the most deprived backgrounds or for those with the greatest educational needs falls unfairly on the shoulders of only some of our post-primary schools, where too many of our newcomer children continue to struggle with literacy and language skills even after a considerable number of years among us. Let me quote *Evangelií Gaudium* again: 'None of us can think we are exempt from concern for the poor and for social justice (201)'; (Christians) 'are called to care for the vulnerable of the earth. But the current model, with its emphasis on success and self-reliance, does not appear to favour an investment in efforts to help the slow, the weak or the less talented to find opportunities in life (EG, 209).

3. 'New' Partnerships

To conclude I would like to offer examples of 'New' Partnerships to assist the New Evangelisation, or should I say—'renewed partnerships', for many of these partnerships already exist in some form.

The first is as 'old as the hills'—partnership between home, school and parish. I am convinced that, if the New Evangelisation is to be a success in Ireland, we must revisit and revitalise this important set of links. Clearly, much value can be added when



home, school and parish share responsibility for a coherent programme of catechesis, linking home, school and parish is in place. This is the vision of *Share the Good News, the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland*. I think it is timely to revisit the Veritas Parish Catechesis Programmes such as 'Do this in Memory', 'The Bridge' and the Confirmation support programmes to examine and harness greater potential from a coherent home-school-parish linked programme of catechesis. For example, as children and young people are introduced to traditional prayers like the Rosary or the Stations of the Cross, opportunities emerge for engaging with their parents and the parish in sustaining these ancient devotions. I would advocate that the writing of all school catechetical materials in the future should include resources for adult catechesis. We must grasp all opportunities for conversion and re-awakening the faith of parents and teachers.

To this end, an 'ex-officio' presence of the school principal, chaplain or R.E. Coordinator on the Parish Pastoral Council, and the involvement of suitably trained teachers as parish catechists is worth considering. Many parishes are already introducing the Robert Barron Catholicism Series, or the Maryvale Adult Faith Programmes. Might we encourage our teachers to avail of these programmes and, indeed, to be trained as facilitators of these programmes for other adults or senior cycle students in a parish setting?

Such initiatives can only be a success if we promote partnership between all those involved in Catechesis and 'Adult Faith Formation' at National, Diocesan and Parish Level. We might usefully begin now to develop 'home-grown' programmes for Ireland to accompany the promotion of

Youcat and the new Adult Catechism in this country.

The National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland, *Share the Good News*, situates 'catechesis within the call to evangelise... and provides principles and guidelines for evangelisation, catechesis and religious education today motivating us to study and research all the means available to bring the Gospel to life anew every day' (preface, SGN).

Speaking here in St Mary's University College, I call for a further 'renewed' partnership, between you, our teacher training College, and those responsible for Catechesis and Evangelisation in our schools and dioceses. The teachers you prepare have so much to bring to the New Evangelisation through their daily witness in our schools and the associated links with parishes and homes. But they will need continuing education in faith and theology. Often they end up ploughing a lonely furrow in school as R.E. teachers or Liturgy Coordinators. One young man who qualified from this College within the past five years told me that already every single letter that even vaguely looks like religion, faith, charity or Catholic ethos lands on his desk! I would encourage a great College like this to become centrally involved in the saving mission of the Church by supporting in concrete ways the New Evangelisation in our Catholic schools. This might be done by surveying knowledge of our faith amongst young people of various ages as well as adults and researching the effectiveness of various catechetical methodologies. There is a pressing need to write and pilot new resources and deliver training programmes on the New Evangelisation for Catholic teachers and parish catechists.



This year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of *Lumen Gentium* which called for lay people to act 'like a 'leaven' sanctifying the world from within '. In the coming months hundreds of our young people will be receiving the Pope John Paul II Award in recognition of their contribution to bringing faith to life. Just imagine the possibilities if the thousands of young people who have already received this Award around the country were to drive the new Evangelisation in Ireland in their 20s and 30s as young parents and parish, school and community leaders.

As Pope Francis said to the young people in Rio, 'The Church needs you, your enthusiasm, your creativity and your joy'.

Our Catholic schools remain a valuable resource in helping our young people, parents and teachers to understand and bear witness to our faith in public and to bring the Gospel of Joy to the world. In reflecting with you on the New Context, a New Mission and New Partnerships this evening, I am inviting our superb Catholic schools to join us in the New Evangelisation and help us to sing a new song to The Lord!



Catholic Schools in U.S. Court China's Youth, and Their Cash

WAYNE, N.J. — When she arrived at [DePaul Catholic High School](#) to join the class of 2014, Di Wang hardly lacked for international experience. The daughter of a Chinese petroleum executive from Shaanxi, she had attended an elite summer camp in Japan. She knew firsthand the pleasures of French cuisine. Her favorite movie was “The Godfather.”

Her worldly exposure, though, did not extend to the particulars of a Roman Catholic education. Ms. Wang, 18, got her first lesson on that inside the school's lobby. Gazing up at an emaciated Jesus hanging from a wooden cross, she was so startled she recalls gasping: “Oh, my God! So this is a Catholic school.”

She is hardly an anomaly. American parochial schools from Westchester County to Washington State are becoming magnets for the offspring of Chinese real estate tycoons, energy executives and government officials. The schools are aggressively recruiting them, flying admissions officers to China, hiring agencies to produce glossy brochures in Chinese, and putting up web pages with eye-catching photos of blond, tousled-haired students gamboling around with their beaming Chinese classmates.

The students, some of whom pay more than five times as much as local students, are infusing an international sensibility into these schools, and helping with their often-battered finances after many have suffered steep declines in enrollment.

Today at DePaul, 39 of the 625 students come from China. Besides courses like

chemistry, European history, studio art and chorus, they also take theology, lead Christian service club meetings and attend monthly Mass, where they can approach the altar to receive a blessing from the priest during communion but cannot partake in the sacramental wafer because they are not baptized.

At [Marquette Catholic High School](#) in Michigan City, Ind., 20 Chinese students live in a brick Victorian and nearby carriage house, recently renovated to accommodate the school's expanding international program. There are 60 international students at [Melbourne Central Catholic High School](#), near Cape Canaveral, Fla., close to 10 percent of the school's population. Most are from China.

“The students are not just going to the big cities,” said Robert R. Bimonte, the president of the National Catholic Educational Association, in Arlington, Va. “It's rural; it's suburban and it's small towns.”

The schools do not require the students to convert. But, several school officials said, they must be respectful during prayers, enroll in mandatory theology courses and fulfill required Christian service hours, which means, for example, tutoring low-income students in a church basement or serving the hungry at a Catholic soup kitchen.

The accommodation goes both ways. At [John F. Kennedy Catholic High School](#) in Somers, N.Y., where about 9 percent of the student body hails from China, bake sales can include both cupcakes and guava-



flavored hard candy. Students in the international friendship club decorate the school with wreaths for Christmas and red paper lanterns for Lunar New Year.

The Rev. Mark Vaillancourt, the principal, says only half jokingly that Beijing has become his fourth recruitment district, after the Bronx and Putnam and Westchester Counties.

With the foreign tuition, he has upgraded the computer labs, completed a gym renovation, installed LED lighting and new ceiling tiles, and added more local students to the scholarship rosters.

Students from China pay \$47,500, more than five times what local students pay. Some, but not all, of the difference is due to room, board and services like insurance. Father Vaillancourt said the higher bill was justified because the parents do not help out on fund-raisers or otherwise contribute, and because he does not believe the students will become active alumni.

Besides helping their own schools, he said he and his counterparts were also developing positive relations between the Church and China's up-and-comers.

"You always want to be a good ambassador for the faith," he said.

Wealthy Chinese parents are not seeking out a Catholic education so much as an American one, to help prepare their children for college in the United States and to escape what many describe as a test-heavy, reductive educational system. Secular private schools have also been recruiting heavily in China in recent years.

Jiacheng Wang, a senior at John F. Kennedy from Ningbo, a coastal city, said he left China to obtain a well-rounded education in the arts and sciences. "I wanted to have time to do the things I love," he said, including drumming and singing. He said that the school's religious affiliation played almost no role in his decision to enroll, but he now finds the school's daily prayers calming. Sometimes before bed now, he prays alone.

"I believe in science," Mr. Wang said. "But now, I'm kind of 50 percent Christian. I start to believe this God stuff."

Asked during a phone interview from China whether she believed her son would convert, his mother, Li Qijun, 46, replied dismissively in Mandarin. "That won't happen."

As for her own religious beliefs: "I don't have any," she said. "I'm a party member, a Communist Party member."

[Anna Sun](#), director of the Asian studies program at Kenyon College, says Chinese students attending parochial schools may well appreciate, and even be moved by, Christian traditions but not feel the need to make a classic conversion.

"Unlike in the West, where one is either a Catholic or a Protestant but cannot be both, most people in China have a more fluid relationship to religion, mainly because traditional Chinese religions are not monotheistic," she said.

The ranks of Chinese Christians are relatively small but growing, in part because of underground churches that have survived in spite of the government's wariness of organized religion. According to a 2011 [Pew Research Center report](#), 5 percent of Chinese



citizens identified themselves as Christian, with less than 1 percent Catholic.

Recruiters and agencies that help place Chinese students in schools abroad say they do not make a big deal about the religious aspect of Catholic schools. Instead they push elements that they believe are more important to today's Chinese families, using phrases like "the value-based, mission-driven" qualities of a Catholic education as well as safety and supervision.

Barnabas Chan, the international admissions recruiter for [Bishop Kearney High School](#) in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, which currently educates about 30 students from China, travels to cities including Kunming, Guangzhou and Zhuhai every winter to give talks at middle schools and in the sprawling living rooms of import-export magnates and technology executives. He says parents do not make much of a distinction between parochial and secular private schools. So, he does not "lead with it."

When they arrived at DePaul two years ago, Ms. Wang and 26 other students from China underwent a three-week orientation before classes began.

They got a primer on the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, ate pizza, toured nearby subdivisions and boned up on their English. Then they moved on to Catholicism.

Bethany Duane-Dacles, a history teacher and director of the school's summer programs, says the seminars included videos, PowerPoint presentations and props like rosary beads. Students were taught the basics: the Ten Commandments, the hierarchy of the church, how to read the Bible and make the sign of the cross.

"If you don't know who Jesus is, it's really difficult," she said.

Theology teachers tend to pass fleetingly through sticky terrain. The church's position on abortion, which directly opposes that of the Chinese government, is one such area.

Ms. Wang, who plans to attend college in the United States, says she has enjoyed learning about church doctrine, which she sums up like this: "Do good, avoid evil."

Sitting in the school library on a recent morning, donning one of DePaul's black fleeces, she said her interest did not extend further. She intends to remain an atheist. Still, now, she does sometimes pray. "Thank God," she whispers to herself, "for this beautiful day."

Kyle Spencer
April 6, 2014

Jeffrey E. Singer contributed reporting.



Catholic Leaders Are Hoping Latinos Can Save Struggling Parochial Schools

By Andrew O'Reilly

Published August 21, 2014

Fox News Latino

NEW YORK—For more than 130 years, sitting just off Times Square, the Holy Cross School opened its doors to students looking for a Catholic education near “The Crossroads of the World.”

But as Times Square transformed from a gaudy and depraved hotspot of vice to one of the city’s main tourist attractions, enrollment at the school began to wane and in 2013 the New York Roman Catholic Archdiocese announced the closing of Holy Cross along with 24 other schools across the state.

The shuttering of Holy Cross is just one of hundreds of closings of Catholic schools across the country in recent years due to sagging enrollment and rising costs to maintain the schools. Some Catholic leaders, however, are now looking to one key demographic in the U.S. to come to their schools, and possibly be the key to save the institutions.

Latinos—making up 17 percent of the U.S. population and a group that is 40 percent Catholic—have been identified by some Catholic leaders as both a population underserved educationally and one of the Church’s best hopes for reviving schools on the brink of closure.

“At the heart of this opportunity is a simple and fundamental reality: our Catholic schools, which are the most effective

instruments of catechetical and intellectual formation (and social transformation) this country has ever known, are uniquely poised to serve Latino families,” Father Joe Corpora of the University of Notre Dame wrote in the preface to a study entitled “Renewing Our Greatest And Best Inheritance.”

Over the past decade, 16 percent of U.S. Catholic schools have closed. They dropped from 8,114 to 6,841 and enrollment nationwide has declined 23 percent—thanks to various factors such as the growth of charter schools, fallout from the church’s sex abuse scandals and changing demographics.

What Catholic schools hope to do with Latino students is very similar to the strategy the Church applied in its more halcyon days of the past.

For decades Catholic school enrollment was driven—especially in major cities like New York, Chicago, Boston and Philadelphia—by immigrants and their children from heavily Catholic countries like Ireland, Italy and Germany.

“The entire Catholic school system began by opening up schools for immigrant children,” Corpora told Fox News Latino.

Greater integration into the U.S., moves away from traditional immigrant enclaves by second and third generation families, and a gradual decline in church membership, all aided the decline of Catholic school



enrollment over the last few decades and by 2000 around 1,900 schools in the U.S. had closed their doors.

Catholic leaders have begun to say that Latino outreach is a critical factor in drawing in Hispanics to the Church's schools and since 2005 dioceses around the country—including in heavily Catholic towns like Boston, Cincinnati and Phoenix—have launched initiatives to appeal to Hispanic students.

By 2010, Latino enrollment in Catholic schools increased by 9 percent nationwide and schools in Peoria, Illinois saw a 34 percent rise in Hispanics. While that changed the number of Latino students from 621 to only 834 in the city's Catholic schools, Corpora said he and other observers are hopeful that the trend will continue across the country.

"It's happening at a slower pace than we want, but it is happening," he said. "It's moving in the right direction."

One problem that has hindered Catholic schools from attracting more Latino students is the prohibitive costs that accompany an education at many of these institutions. Catholic elementary school tuition can average between \$6,000 to \$8,000 a year, which can be a pricey venture for immigrant and low-income families with multiple children.

"Many in the immigrant population are just worried about the day-to-day," [Sylvia Armas-Abad, the Los Angeles field correspondent for Notre Dame's Catholic School Advantage told the Religion News Wire.](#) "We come in thinking that Catholic

schools are elite and exclusive, because that's how they are in Latin America."

In an attempt to make schools more affordable for newly arrived Hispanic students, some states are offering vouchers for private education in areas where public institutions are struggling. And the Catholic School Advantage is advising some schools to offer income-based tuition to make it easier for low-income families to meet the expense of their children's education.

"This is like the Delta Airlines model where they sell certain seats for lower prices than others," Corpora said. "It doesn't make sense to fly a plane with empty seats and it doesn't make sense to run a school with 25 empty desks."

In some cities the vouchers and income-based tuition seem to be paying dividends with schools, not only keeping them afloat but helping them actually gain students. Chicago Catholic elementary schools saw enrollment increase 3 percent in 2012 and 1 percent the year before last year—the first two-year growth spurt since 1965. Boston-area elementary schools had a 2 percent bump in that time—the first in 20 years.

The outreach efforts—at least marginally—appear to be paying off but Church officials want to make clear that the push for more Latinos in their schools has less to do with saving educational institutions and more to do with helping a community in need.

"We're not in this to build up Catholic schools but to give Latinos a good education," Corpora said, adding that a higher enrollment in the schools was just a nice payoff. "It's a cause and effect."



'The Dumbest Generation' by Mark Bauerlein

By Lee Drutman, Special to *The Times*

July 5, 2008

In the four minutes it probably takes to read this review, you will have logged exactly half the time the average 15- to 24-year-old now spends reading each day. That is, if you even bother to finish. If you are perusing this on the Internet, the big block of text below probably seems daunting, maybe even boring. Who has the time? Besides, one of your Facebook friends might have just posted a status update!

Such is the kind of recklessly distracted impatience that makes Mark Bauerlein fear for his country. "As of 2008," the 49-year-old professor of English at Emory University writes in "The Dumbest Generation," "the intellectual future of the United States looks dim."

The way Bauerlein sees it, something new and disastrous has happened to America's youth with the arrival of the instant gratification go-go-go digital age. The result is, essentially, a collective loss of context and history, a neglect of "enduring ideas and conflicts." Survey after painstakingly recounted survey reveals what most of us already suspect: that America's youth know virtually nothing about history and politics. And no wonder. They have developed a "brazen disregard of books and reading."

Things were not supposed to be this way. After all, "never have the opportunities for education, learning, political action, and cultural activity been greater," writes Bauerlein, a former director of Research and Analysis at the National Endowment for the Arts. But somehow, he contends, the much-

ballyhooed advances of this brave new world have not only failed to materialize—they've actually made us dumber.

The problem is that instead of using the Web to learn about the wide world, young people instead mostly use it to gossip about each other and follow pop culture, relentlessly keeping up with the ever-shifting lingua franca of being cool in school. The two most popular websites by far among students are Facebook and MySpace. "Social life is a powerful temptation," Bauerlein explains, "and most teenagers feel the pain of missing out."

This ceaseless pipeline of peer-to-peer activity is worrisome, he argues, not only because it crowds out the more serious stuff but also because it strengthens what he calls the "pull of immaturity." Instead of connecting them with parents, teachers and other adult figures, "[t]he web . . . encourages more horizontal modeling, more raillery and mimicry of people the same age." When Bauerlein tells an audience of college students, "You are six times more likely to know who the latest American Idol is than you are to know who the speaker of the U.S. House is," a voice in the crowd tells him: "'American Idol' IS more important."

Bauerlein also frets about the nature of the Internet itself, where people "seek out what they already hope to find, and they want it fast and free, with a minimum of effort." In entering a world where nobody ever has to stick with anything that bores or challenges them, "going online habituates them to juvenile mental habits."

And all this feeds on itself. Increasingly disconnected from the "adult" world of



tradition, culture, history, context and the ability to sit down for more than five minutes with a book, today's digital generation is becoming insulated in its own stultifying cocoon of bad spelling, civic illiteracy and endless postings that hopelessly confuse triviality with transcendence. Two-thirds of U.S. undergraduates now score above average on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, up 30% since 1982, he reports.

At fault is not just technology but also a newly indulgent attitude among parents, educators and other mentors, who, Bauerlein argues, lack the courage to risk "being labeled a curmudgeon and a reactionary."

But is he? The natural (and anticipated) response would indeed be to dismiss him as your archetypal cranky old professor who just can't understand why "kids these days" don't find Shakespeare as timeless as he always has. Such alarmism ignores the context and history he accuses the youth of lacking—the fact that mass ignorance and apathy have always been widespread in anti-intellectual America, especially among the

youth. Maybe something is different this time. But, of course. Something is different every time.

The book's ultimate doomsday scenario—of a dull and self-absorbed new generation of citizens falling prey to demagoguery and brazen power grabs—seems at once overblown (witness, for example, this election season's youth reengagement in politics) and also yesterday's news (haven't we always been perilously close to this, if not already suffering from it?). But amid the sometimes annoyingly frantic warning bells that ding throughout "The Dumbest Generation," there are also some keen insights into how the new digital world really is changing the way young people engage with information and the obstacles they face in integrating any of it meaningfully. These are insights that educators, parents and other adults ignore at their peril.

Lee Drutman is co-author of "The People's Business: Controlling Corporations and Restoring Democracy."



A Review of Bauerlein's "The Dumbest Generation"

Written by [James Heiser](#)

The Dumbest Generation is a book that is painful to read, but which Americans dare not ignore. The book's title reflects the confrontational character of its findings: Mark Bauerlein addresses a topic that refuses to be ignored, and he does so with a command of the facts and the passion of a jeremiad.

As Bauerlein observes in the "Introduction": "This book is an attempt to consolidate the best and broadest research into a different profile of the rising American mind. It doesn't cover behaviors and values, only the intellect of under-30-year-olds. Their political leanings don't matter, nor do their career ambitions. The manners, music, clothing, speech, sexuality, faith, diversity, depression, criminality, drug use, moral codes, and celebrities of the young spark many books, articles, research papers, and marketing strategies centered on Generation Y (or Generation DotNet, or the Millennials), but not this one. It sticks to one thing, the intellectual condition of young Americans, and describes it with empirical evidence, recording something hard to document but nonetheless insidious happening inside their heads. The information is scattered and underanalyzed, but once collected and compared, it charts a consistent and perilous momentum downward."

What Bauerlein documents is that it is not that the educational system has failed to keep children busy—the school day is filled with frenetic activities—but that the system fails to accomplish the one thing which rests at the heart of its charter: schools fail to

teach. Trained to make use of the most up-to-date information technologies, many modern students are unable to retain and assimilate such information, and one of the most important elements of an education—the ability to apply past lessons and events to present concerns—is almost entirely outside of their grasp.

Bauerlein masterfully interweaves anecdotal incidents and statistical studies throughout *The Dumbest Generation*, which serves to magnify the impact of the work on the reader. For example, while demonstrating the bibliophobia of the rising generation, he dismisses the claim "at-least-Harry-Potter-has-kids-reading" with the statistical demonstration that not only is the rate of reading in precipitous decline, but the depth of material read is also markedly degraded: "The percentage of 17-year-olds who 'Never or hardly ever' read for fun more than doubled from 1984 to 2004, 9 percent to 19 percent. Over the same period, the percentage of 17-year-olds who read for fun 'Almost every day' dropped by 9 points. Nearly half of high school seniors (48 percent) read for fun 'once or twice a month or less.'" When Bauerlein asks, "Has the undergraduate plan become so pre-professionalized that the curriculum functions as a high-level vocational training that dulls the intellectual curiosity that encourages outside book reading?," the reader knows the answer. True education has little place in the institutions that Russell Kirk once dubbed "Behemoth University."

Bauerlein's evaluation of online learning and the over-use and misuse of technology in education deserves a more lengthy review that can be allotted here. Reviewing the



evidence at his disposal, Bauerlein is largely dismissive of the educational benefits of online study and cites studies that demonstrate that such research may actually damage the student's overall ability to assimilate information. "Nonlinear, nonhierarchical thinking sounds creative and individualized, but once the Web dominates a student's intellectual sphere, does it change value, sliding into a destructive temptation to eschew more disciplined courses of thinking, to avoid reading a long poem line by line, tracking a logical argument point by point, assembling a narrative event by event...? The other effects, too, might prove harmful. If students grow up thinking that texts are for interactivity—to add, to delete, to cut and paste—do they acquire the patience to assimilate complex texts on their own terms, to read *The Illiad* without assuming that the epic exists to serve their purposes?" In fact, studies demonstrate that very little *reading* goes on with the Internet at all; for the most part what takes place is superficial *skimming* which utterly undermines the reader's ability to meaningfully engage the text. The deterioration of any capacity for critical reading and thinking will echo throughout the broader culture: "The habits young people form after school, on weekends, and over the summer are pleasing—fast scanning, page hopping, sloppy writing, associative thinking, no unfamiliar content—and while they undermine the values and demands of the classroom and the workplace (scrupulous reading, good grammar, analytical thinking), these habits won't go away."

The problems highlighted by *The Dumbest Generation* demand a response; even if one is critical of the extent to which the author presses his argument, it is difficult to

honestly contend with the underlying thesis. There have been, and will continue to be, many who will pander to the vanity of the young and praise them for their presumed technological prowess and "hard work." As Cervantes observed, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The results of the ongoing miseducation of the young is statistically demonstrable and anecdotally seemingly omnipresent in the semiliterate ramblings of *MySpace* and other forums.

Bauerlein declares in his conclusion: "It's time for over-30-year-olds of all kinds to speak out, not just social conservatives who fret over Internet pornography, or political Leftists who want to rouse the youth vote, or traditionalist educators who demand higher standards in the curriculum. Adults everywhere need to align against youth ignorance and apathy, and not fear the 'old foggy' tag and recoil from the smirks of the young. The moral poles need to reverse, with the young no longer setting the pace for right conduct and cool thinking. Let's tell the truth. The Dumbest Generation will cease being dumb only when it regards adolescence as an inferior realm of petty strivings and adulthood as a realm of civil, historical, and cultural awareness that puts them in touch with the perennial ideas and struggles." In short, the struggle continues to be for what T. S. Eliot memorably called "the permanent things." Pursuing *data* instead of *truth*, the rising generation is in mortal danger of losing both the facts and their implications and such a loss threatens the entire fabric of the American Republic.

Mark Bauerlein, [*The Dumbest Generation — How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future*](#), (New York: Tarcher/Penguin, 2008 [hardcover] and 2009 [paperback]).



Do Christian Schools Produce Good Citizens? The Evidence Says Yes.

According to their critics, private Christian schools foster an attitude of isolation and withdrawal from society. And according to their boosters, public schools provide a unique and essential preparation for citizenship in a diverse nation. For the past five years, my colleagues and I at Cardus have been studying these claims, and last week, [we released a new study](#) that shows just how little data exists to support them.

Do private schools (whether religious or not) foster social isolation? Do public schools uniquely help to create the “social capital” that comes from diverse friendships and working relationships? Based on the data we released last week, the answer seems to be no on both counts. Adult graduates of Evangelical Protestant, Catholic, non-religious private, and public schools were all as likely to have a close friend who was an atheist or of a different race. The only statistically significant difference we found was that Evangelical Protestants were marginally less likely to have a close gay or lesbian friend—about 57 percent of evangelical Protestant graduates, compared to 69 percent of public school graduates, report a friend or relative who is gay or lesbian.

The Cardus survey, collected in March 2014 and analyzed by the team at the [Cardus Religious Schools Initiative at the University of Notre Dame](#), was designed to

give a comprehensive account of how different kinds of high schools contribute to the academic achievement, cultural engagement, and spiritual formation of their graduates.

The results of this survey were mostly consistent with a similar survey we conducted in 2011. While it’s inevitably most interesting to look at the differences among graduates of these different kinds of schools—more about those in a moment—one of the most striking results is the similarities. On more than half of the over 500 slides of results (available for free download along with the report at www.carduseducationsurvey.com), there are no statistically significant differences between the various schooling types.

Some will find these similarities comforting, while others will find them disconcerting. Within the educational establishment policy and research community, they are at the very least surprising, not least because of the implications for public funding of private alternatives to government-run schools. In a panel discussion at Roosevelt House in New York City on September 10th after the results were released, former New York State Commissioner of Education David Steiner asked: “If the results are the same, is there any justification for not publicly funding private schools?”



There are differences between the graduates of different kinds of schools, to be sure. Evangelical Protestant graduates marry younger, have more children, divorce less, and are more active in their church communities than other graduates—although, confounding rumors of evangelical isolation, they are more active in their broader communities as well. Academically, Evangelical Protestant school graduates look quite similar to public school graduates. Evangelical Protestant male graduates are more likely than others not to go beyond high school, representing a greater occupational involvement in the trades, but (confounding still more rumors, this time of evangelical sexism) Evangelical Protestant female graduates are as equally likely as those from other sectors to pursue tertiary education.

Another significant difference between Evangelical Protestant graduates and others is that they are less likely than others to pursue majors and careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math)-related occupations. They are more likely to be employed in education, health, and other social science-related occupations (the “caring professions”). When it comes to choosing a career, financial reward seems to have a lower priority in their decision-making process. They are much more likely to pursue a career based on a sense of “calling from God” or vocation than their counterparts from other school types.

Catholic school graduates, on the other hand, tend to look more like graduates of

non-religious private schools—for these graduates, the various measures of academic attainment are consistently higher than other sectors. Catholic graduates tend to be employed in STEM occupations as well as disproportionately in managerial and professional occupations, especially in fields related to finance. At the same time, our study confirmed the 2011 finding that Catholic schools do not seem to be producing the spiritual formation results that most Catholic parents would presumably aspire to when choosing Catholic education for their children.

There was one other intriguing result among the graduates of private schools that are not religious (neither Evangelical nor Catholic)—they gave relatively positive evaluations of the contribution of their schools to their religious and spiritual formation. (As with all these findings, the sample here was controlled for socioeconomic and religious backgrounds in order to enable “apples to apples” comparisons.) Although non-religious schools are by definition officially secular just like public schools, it would seem that non-religious private schools are much more open and supportive of the religious expression of their students. Perhaps this is because many non-religious schools originated as religious schools; perhaps it reflects the public schools’ hypersensitivity to any religious expression. Whatever the cause, the results are striking.

One final finding should not be overlooked: the “satisfaction” results in which respondents were asked to evaluate how well their high school prepared them for



various dimensions of adult life. Every one of the private school types have significantly more positive evaluations in this domain, in almost every measure, than public schools. One might argue this is to be expected, given that tuition was paid for the private school experience, but that alone can hardly explain the dramatic gap.

Our project isn't intended to be the last word. Rather, we seek to bring reliable data into the discussion, so that those interested in the pros and cons of the various school

sectors can make more informed choices. And we hope those involved in education will take an opportunity to look in the mirror this survey provides. Ultimately these results matter for all of us—most of all because they debunk the myth that religious schools are somehow deficient in creating the social capital necessary for a vibrant democratic society. As it turns out, that couldn't be further from the truth.

Ray Pennings
September 17, 2014



Where Did They Learn All These Things?

Homily for Catholic Schools Mass, preached by the Most Reverend David O'Connell, C.M., at St. Mary of the Assumption Cathedral in Trenton on 7 October 2014.

Did Jesus ever go to school? The Bible doesn't say, so we cannot be sure. The New Testament does tell us that Jesus could read, something He had to learn somewhere. The New Testament also suggests that Jesus could write—again, something He had to learn somewhere. Jesus also knew the Hebrew Scriptures since He quoted them often. Where did He learn the Jewish religion and all its rules and practices?

Historians and scholars of the ancient world tell us that education in Jesus' time began in the home and was the responsibility of the father. There was no real school system as there is today, but there was usually a school attached to the synagogue where children, especially boys, would learn the Scriptures and the laws of the Jewish faith. The emphasis was on memorization since not too many books were available, especially in a small town like Nazareth. As far as other academic subjects were concerned, these were learned from adults who served as mentors to the children. They usually learned a trade from their fathers and continued their businesses. The New Testament tells us that Jesus was the “son of a carpenter.”

So, we cannot say for sure that Jesus “went to school” as we do, but we have no reason to doubt that His early life in Nazareth was much different from other boys of His day. When we read about Jesus in the Bible,—however, He does seem to be well educated—probably a combination of things He learned from His parents, from the

synagogue, from people of His time. St. Luke tells us that “the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom and the favor of God was upon him” (2:40).

There is a great story told in St. Luke's Gospel that after one of their annual trips to the Temple in Jerusalem, the holy city, when Jesus was about twelve, Mother Mary and her husband Joseph lost track of Him for three days, each one thinking He was with the other. Can you imagine what that must have been like? I remember once getting separated from my parents on the boardwalk at the shore. I couldn't find my parents for a couple of hours and I was scared to death. But St. Luke tells us that when Jesus' parents found Him, not only was He calm as can be but He was “sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers” (2:46-47). Very interesting for a boy who didn't have much schooling. And St. Luke ends his story telling us that Jesus went home to Nazareth with His parents and “increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man” (2:52).

In the synagogue schools, the rabbi not only taught their young students about the Hebrew Scriptures and the laws and customs of their faith, but historians tells us they were also responsible for teaching about values and behavior, how to live in this world. Schools in the ancient Jewish world were not very organized, but they did accomplish something important in the lives of young people.

Here we are today, 2000 later, celebrating our Catholic schools which are very well organized and teach us so much and prepare



us so well. Our schools are not small groups of children gathered in the synagogue as in Jesus' day: they are real schools attached to our parish churches with hundreds of young people attending. They have a curriculum in math and science, English and history, language arts and music, computer technology and so many other things important for our education. But, like the little synagogue schools in Jesus' time, our Catholic schools have one most important subject that makes them different from public schools: our Catholic Faith—they introduce us to Jesus Christ and to the Church He founded. They teach us Catholic values and behavior so that we are prepared to give witness to our faith, to live our faith, to make a difference in the world. My young sisters and brothers, our schools are different and we are different because of our faith and all that we are learning about it from the dedicated teachers who teach us so well. Believing in God, knowing Jesus, praying and going to Mass and the Sacraments, learning what the Church teaches, and living and loving others because of our faith—that's what makes us different, that's what helps us see the world differently, through Jesus' eyes, that's what makes us treat one another differently as Jesus asks us to do. And that's why we are here today in this Cathedral, the most important church in our Diocese, from so many different schools and

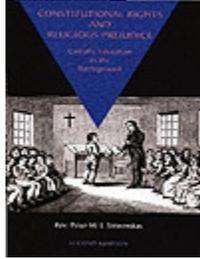
parishes all over New Jersey. We are one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church together from pre-K through twelfth grade. And the sacrifices that our wonderful parents make give us this great opportunity to learn our faith, to grow in wisdom and hope and favor with God.

Later on in His life, when Jesus Himself as an adult was teaching in the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth, the Gospel of St. Matthew tells us people asked, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works ... isn't he the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brethren James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ... Where did this man get all this?" (13:54-55). True, we believe Jesus was God and His wisdom came from God, but He was also man and He learned so much from the human life He lived, beginning at His mother Mary's knee and His foster-father Joseph's gentle instruction, continuing in the synagogue where He learned His Jewish faith.

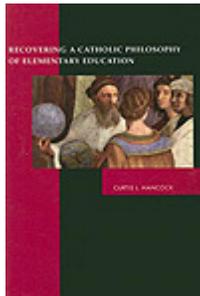
As your Bishop, I believe that one day people will be amazed at you, too. They will look at your lives and ask, where did they learn all these things? And, if you really work at growing in wisdom and in your faith now, you will be able to say later with joy and pride, "I learned all these things in Catholic school."



As a special offer to our readers, we are making available two books from Newman House Press at a great discount.



The first is *Constitutional Rights and Religious Prejudice: Catholic Education as the Battleground*, by Father Peter Stravinskis, giving the historical and legal background to the century-long effort to obtain justice for the parents of children in religious schools. It retails for \$10.00. Orders of twenty-five or more to one address qualify for the special rate of \$3.00 per book; single orders, \$5.00 per book.



The second is *Recovering a Catholic Philosophy of Elementary Education*, by Professor Curtis Hancock, the first text on this topic in English in over forty years. This volume is ideal for a communal reading project for a faculty (elementary or secondary), using the questions at the end of each chapter as a guide for discussion. It retails for \$20.00. Orders of twenty-five or more to one address qualify for the special rate of \$3.00 per book; single orders, \$5.00 per book.

