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A Word from Our Editor

This issue of *The Catholic Educator* makes its appearance at the outset of a new academic year — always a moment of great hope and joy for teachers – and parents!

On August 18-19, the Catholic Education Foundation sponsored a seminar, *The Role of the Priest in the Catholic School of Today*. Although not much advance notice was possible, this “maiden voyage” of CEF into clerical education was a rousing success, bringing together priests from fourteen dioceses. Their evaluations of the program were uniformly positive, resulting in numerous invitations for us to provide similar workshops in their dioceses of origin. The event was covered by Catholic News Service, which subsequently published an extensive article on the seminar; that piece is included in the present issue.

Likewise during the summer, I was able to present a paper to the Newman Association of America at their annual conference: “Cardinal Newman and Pope Francis: Catholic Schools as Key to an Educated Laity.” The theme of the talk dealt with the profound appreciation of both Cardinal Newman and Pope Francis for the mission and accomplishments of Catholic elementary and secondary schools. The full

text is also offered here for what I hope will be for your edification and enjoyment — and potential use.

By accident, I have had occasion to peruse dozens of parish bulletins and websites recently, where I have made a most disturbing discovery. In those important means of parochial communication, I have found that most parishes which do not have schools do not list on their bulletin covers or websites where Catholic schools are available. Even stranger, that is often the case even with parishes that do sponsor schools! So, let me assign you some homework: Check out the bulletins and websites of parishes with which you are associated; if they fail in this regard, take as your task the duty of raising the matter with the pastor.

Finally, as the Synod on the Family gears up, I ask that you pray that the Synod Fathers this time around (unlike last year’s gathering) would devote significant attention to the role which Catholic schools can, do and should play in building up the Christian family.

Reverend Peter M. J. Stravinskis, Ph.D.,
S.T.D.
Executive Director



Vince Lombardi: How the Catholic Church Formed One of the Greatest Coaches of all Time

In the middle of winter, between Epiphany and Ash Wednesday, a secular ritual of nearly fifty years has become part of the American cultural scene. It is called the Super Bowl, the championship game of the interminably long National Football League season. Two weeks of incessant television extravaganza lead up to the game itself, which ends with the winner being awarded the Lombardi Trophy named for a man now 44 years dead but still considered by many to be the greatest football coach in the history of the game.

In nine years as head coach of the Green Bay Packers, Vince Lombardi transformed an inept team into the powerhouse NFL dynasty of the 1960s, winning the NFL championship five times and winning the first two Super Bowls. Lombardi was also intensely Catholic, a man who went to daily Mass. The Catholic Church was instrumental in forming the football coaching great.

Born in 1913 in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, Vince Lombardi was the oldest of five children. His parents were part of the great southern Italian diaspora, specifically Salerno in Campania. Enrico “Harry” Lombardi was a butcher and ran a shop in

the Manhattan’s Meatpacking District with his brother, Eddie. He had three siblings. Matilda “Mattie” Lombardi, one of thirteen children born to Antonio and Laura Izzo, took care of the family home.

Sunday Mass was compulsory for all the Lombardis. Following Mass were long Sunday dinners shared with several of the Izzo family and other relatives, friends and, on occasion, local priests. These dinners were never shorter than two hours and could last deep into the night. The food came out of the kitchen in waves. Antipasto. Minestrone soup. Spaghetti and meatballs. Ravioli. And the Izzo family favorite, spinach pie. The wine was homemade from grapes grown in the backyard. The food was cooked by Mattie and her four sisters in a demonstration of culinary teamwork. This Italian-American Sunday routine, combining Mass with an extended family meal, was harmonious for all those who experienced it and was vital to the upbringing of Vince Lombardi.

June 7, 2013
Derek Leaberry
www.vatican.va



Disappointing Day for Equal Educational Opportunity in NY

For the last several months, the New York legislature has been debating a tax credit scholarship bill that would have increased charitable funding to help more children from low- and moderate-income New York families obtain a quality education in both public and non-public schools. Unfortunately, this week, we learned it did not make it into the final agreement reached by Gov. Andrew Cuomo and our state's legislative leaders.

This disappointment comes despite forceful advocacy from Gov. Cuomo, who barnstormed the state in support of the plan, and the backing of 150 organizations that spanned the political spectrum and included police, firefighter, construction, and other trade unions.

This was the first time anywhere in the country that such a diverse group joined a Democratic governor to support a program aimed at helping disadvantaged students attend the same private schools as their better-off peers.

Instead, legislative leaders approved spending \$250 million to reimburse non-public schools for government-mandated services, including reporting daily attendance, administering state exams, and buying technology.

While the funds are welcome, they will not help families who are struggling financially to keep their children enrolled in a private or parochial school, or are desperate to make that choice, but can't afford tuition.

Under pressure from the New York State United Teachers and the New York City United Federation of Teachers, many Democrats in the Assembly abandoned their support for the Education Tax Credit and blocked its passage, even though every one of them represents many families the legislation was designed to help.

Ironically, the teachers unions must have been okay with giving \$250 million to private schools directly. The problem they clearly have is with empowering parents with expanded private scholarship opportunities for their children — even though it would have come at a lower cost to the state.

The arguments that the tax credit would benefit the “wealthy and Wall Street” and “take away” from public education are completely bogus to any person who takes even a moment to look a little more closely at the issue.

The real beneficiaries of the Education Tax Credit would have been the mostly low-income children who could have used tax credit funds to attend private or parochial schools with scholarships. Donors who contributed to scholarship funds would only have received 75 cents on the dollar in tax credits.

Just this April, in the New York State budget, lawmakers approved a \$1.5 billion increase to public education for next year, to \$23.5 billion — the most financial aid ever approved by the state to public schools. The Education Tax Credit would not have taken a dime of this money away.



Meanwhile, most private and parochial schools get by on significantly less money than public schools. The average cost to educate an elementary school student in New York City Catholic schools is around \$7,000, compared to around \$20,000 per student in the New York City public schools. The tuition they actually pay is often even lower, averaging around \$4,000 a student, and yet many struggling families simply cannot afford these schools which have helped to lift generations of New Yorkers into the middle class.

As education costs climb while results do not, lawmakers who resist adapting to our new economy by embracing a range of education alternatives, including charter schools, private schools, homeschooling, and blended learning, should be aware of the real threat we face when students do not get the education they need to become successful adults. We can't afford to see students continue to drop out of high school or graduate without the skills necessary to support themselves because they were denied opportunities that would have helped them succeed.

We need to stop defensively pitting public schools against private schools. And we shouldn't be afraid to empower parents to make the decision of where and how their children should be educated.

In the meantime, the Children's Scholarship Fund and its Buffalo partner will continue to help as many New York children as we can obtain a better education by providing privately funded scholarships allowing them to attend private and parochial schools. As an example of our impact, 92 percent of our CSF Scholars graduated on time last June and 90 percent are now enrolled in college.

When New Yorkers read the news reports that denying this opportunity to children was a victory for the teachers unions, they'll see the system is serving someone. Too bad it's not the kids.

Darla Romfo
June 25, 2015
<https://www.redefinedonline.org>



A Complete Education: It's Catholic

In an article titled “The Goal of Classical Education Is Truth” and published a few months ago in *Crisis* magazine, author and educator Tom Jay makes an important admission — a confession, really — when he writes,

Yet, one thing we may not do, since we are not a Catholic academy, is link the pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty to the One Who is truth, goodness, and beauty. The full reformation and redemption of education in America can only be accomplished through a Catholic academy...

To what is he referring when he writes about the “one thing we may not do”? He refers to the so-called “classical academies” which are popping up as charter schools. And why are these charter schools unable to make the link between the truth which they strive to teach, with the God Who is Truth? It is because charter schools are public schools.

There are parents who are enticed by these public charter schools, and understandably so. After all, they’re free, aren’t they? Well...yes...they are free in the sense that they are paid for by money which has been filtered through the government, with all the attached government restrictions about any mention of God and the Faith.

“But I can teach my kids their religion, and the school can teach them everything else,” is the response of many parents. Of course parents can teach religion to their children — and not only can they, but they should be teaching the Faith to their children — it is a great part of their parental responsibility!

No, the bigger issue with a school which must exclude God and the Faith from what is taught, is that it is impossible to teach the full truth without God and the Faith being in the mix.

If you were required to eat food which had most of the vitamins and all the flavor boiled out of it before you ate it, would you think you were receiving a healthy diet? Probably not. If your child is being taught history and literature and the great thoughts of mankind, with all reference to God and to the revealed and living Catholic Faith being eliminated, would that be a complete and balanced education? Definitely not. And even with conscientious parents filling in the gaps, it’s a bit like trying to add a missing ingredient after a cake has come out of the oven.

There is a short document with a long name which came out of the Second Vatican Council. It is called *Gravissimum educationis* and it was promulgated on October 28, 1965 by Pope Paul VI, following approval by the assembled bishops.

It is an important document because it contains the Church’s teaching about education — particularly the essential place of Catholic schools — and it discusses the combined responsibilities of the Church and of parents.

It begins by stating the universal right of everyone to receive an education, and this right is extended to the Faithful in a special way, in that it should be a Christian education. The Council Fathers make it clear that parents are to be recognized as “the primary and principal educators” with the



particular responsibility of creating “a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and man, in which the well-rounded personal and social education of children is fostered.” In fact, the document states that “the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs.”

The Council Fathers then observe that the family “which has the primary duty of imparting education needs the help of the whole community.” As parents carry out the duty of educating their children, they entrust a share of this work to others who can assist them, and it is made clear that “in a special way, the duty of educating belongs to the Church, not merely because she must be recognized as a human society capable of educating, but especially because she has the responsibility of announcing the way of salvation to all men, of communicating the life of Christ to those who believe, and, in her unfailing solicitude, of assisting men to be able to come to the fullness of this life.” In fact, the bishops make it clear that “the Church is bound as a mother to give to these children of hers an education by which their whole life can be imbued with the spirit of Christ...”

In this sacred duty of the Church to assist parents with the education of their children,

the Council Fathers state that “among all educational instruments the school has a special importance.”

The bishops go on to say: “The Council also reminds Catholic parents of the duty of entrusting their children to Catholic schools wherever and whenever it is possible and of supporting these schools to the best of their ability and of cooperating with them for the education of their children.”

When it comes to the education of our precious children, there is no such thing as “free.” There is always a price to be extracted, and that price must not be at the expense of the fullness of Truth. Giving our children a Catholic education in a school which includes daily participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, with ready access to a priest for the Sacrament of Confession as well as spiritual counsel, all in a setting in which God is not an external Unmentionable, but rather is the daily Presence which animates all that we do and say, is something that truly is priceless — that is, without price.

Fr. Christopher George Phillips
June 18, 2015



‘Darius, Follow Me’

American-Indian Student Darius Sparks Finds Focus through Catholic Education

College freshman Darius Sparks, a business major and basketball player at the University of Mary in Bismarck, N.D., says he is living a dream now.

Today, at age 20, his life is good — very good. For that, he thanks God, his loving foster parents and Catholic education. Although several colleges were interested in recruiting him for basketball, he chose the University of Mary, in large part, he said, because of its Catholic identity.

You were all-state in basketball and football and the captain of your football team at St. Mary’s Central High School. How did you end up going there?

After eighth grade, I was in foster care and had the option of going to public or private school. I knew some of the St. Mary’s students from playing travel basketball with them. When I toured St. Mary’s, I loved how Mr. Ruggles [a religion teacher] described the school: “We’re like a family; everyone knows each other, and we treat each other with respect and kindness.”

During this time, I also had a dream. I was in St. Mary’s School. It was dark, and someone was after me. I ran up the stairs, where there were a lot of doors. I heard a faint voice calling my name. One of the doors opened, and the priest walked in and said, “Darius, follow me.” He put his arm over my shoulder and walked out into the light with me. When [Father Josh] Waltz talked during freshman orientation, he looked so familiar to me. Then it hit me: He was the priest in my dream.

Tell me about your childhood.

My mom took good care of my sister and me until I was 3 years old. After her dad died — they had been very close — she got into drugs and drinking. My mom told me that my own dad had left her when he found out she was pregnant. She tried to make sure my sister and I knew that she loved us, but it was so hard for her to handle her addiction.

We moved around a lot. My sister and I saw my mom get beaten by boyfriends sometimes. Often, there was no food at home, so I would steal from stores so my sister and I could eat. I was taken away from my mom at age 7, 9 and then for good at 12 and put into foster care.

Were you raised Catholic?

My grandma Betty — she’s really my sister’s grandmother, but she’s like my grandmother, too — took me to Mass. Everyone assumed I was Catholic; I even did. It was not until recently that we discovered I was never baptized. As a matter of fact, Father Waltz is working with me right now to help me get ready for Baptism and Confirmation.

Your background was very different from that of your classmates. Was it hard for you to fit in?

I didn’t make friends right away, and the schoolwork was hard — I had a lot of gaps. My worst grades were in religion, because it was like learning a new language, but I caught on. I started becoming friends with



the guys I played sports with. They became like brothers to me.

While you were a sophomore at St. Mary's, you got into trouble and could have been kicked out. What happened?

I was invited to play AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) basketball. It's a highly competitive traveling league. It cost \$2,600 to cover everything. My coach set up [an opportunity for] selling cookie dough and pizzas to help us raise money.

I raised \$1,600, but with the deadline near, I was still \$1,000 short. When I was younger, I used to steal and sell things to get money. It seemed like my only solution. I visited my grandma in Mobridge and stole her pain medication, planning to sell it. Instead, my foster parents discovered it, and I was sent to live in a group home for 11 months. It felt like I had lost everything. But the principal, Dr. Eberle, told me he saw something in me and let me stay at St. Mary's.

How did moving into the home of Mike and Janel Schmitz change your life?

I was in a group home part of my sophomore year. Their two boys had attended St. Mary's, and their oldest son, Jason, heard about me from the head basketball coach. "He needs someone to save him," the coach told Jason. Jason told his parents, who felt God was calling them to take me in. Even though I had decided to live with my grandma Betty, the Schmitzes went through foster-care licensing and invited me to their home to meet them that summer. They immediately hugged me when I walked in the door. From the start, everything clicked. I have been treated like one of their own sons and am still a part of their family. Once I felt like I was loved and

belonged, it inspired me to want to give back to others.

You raised money for new playground equipment at the St. Bernard Mission School on the Fort Yates Indian Reservation, where you spent part of your childhood. How did that come about?

Our senior class went on a one-day mission trip to St. Bernard Mission School. I had lived on the reservation for part of my childhood. After Mass, when Father [Basil] Atwell told us that, for some kids, school is the only place they feel safe and know they will be fed, it hit me hard. I started crying — that had been my childhood.

Later, when I played with the kids on the playground, I noticed the broken-down playground equipment was the same stuff I played on as a kid. When I got home, I put together a letter to send to the St. Mary's families, asking for donations for new equipment. [Note: \$25,000 was raised for a new play structure. Father Atwell is hoping for additional donations to be able to get something for the very young children, too.]

I heard you met your father for the first time. How did that come about?

My mom was mistaken about who my real father was. A cousin saw a picture of me in the paper during basketball season and showed it to him. We look exactly alike. In February, once he found out about me, he drove here from South Dakota to the rest of my basketball games and was at my graduation. It was the first time I ever had a parent in the stands at one of my basketball games.

Why did you choose to attend the University of Mary?



At St. Mary's, even sports are centered on faith. No matter, win or lose, we still prayed after the games. It was an example that, in life, even when something goes wrong, you shouldn't forget about your faith.

I want to embrace the Catholic Faith. It's one of the reasons I chose to attend the University of Mary — for the support to live it. I really believe in the Catholic Faith, [Church teaching], especially the marriage part. I had a marriage and family life class my senior year at St. Mary's [high school], and I also witnessed the benefits of a strong marriage from Mike and Janel.

I also appreciate that they try to graduate students in four years.

What is your favorite subject?

English composition, because I love to write essays and tell my story. Most of my essay papers are stories from my life, so I thrive in this class.

What is the Catholic environment on campus like?

It is very awesome. The students and teachers on campus are very positive. There is a chapel in a building connected to my dorm, so if I need to pray and collect myself, it's open 24/7 for any student to go in there. Also, there is daily Mass on campus, and there are a couple of Masses on Sundays.

What does the future hold?

Someone has already promised me an internship as a stockbroker when I graduate. I also want to become a motivational speaker and find ways to help underprivileged kids and young adults. I want to give hope to others that things can get better.

Patti Armstrong
May 12, 2015
National Catholic Register



Vatican to Address ‘Educational Emergency’ at World Congress Marking Key Anniversaries

Marking the anniversaries of two critical Vatican documents on education, the Vatican’s Congregation for Catholic Education is preparing for a World Congress this year to address the growing “educational emergency” in Catholic education.

This year is the 50th anniversary of the Vatican II Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimum Educationis*, issued by Pope Paul VI in 1965, and the 25th anniversary of the Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, issued by Saint Pope John Paul II in 1990.

But while the anniversaries call for celebration of the important mission of Catholic education, the Congregation for Catholic Education plans to discuss some of the more critical concerns in education when its World Congress meets in Rome on November 18-21.

“As part of these celebrations, the Congregation aims to re-energize the Church’s commitment to education, by means of this World Congress,” the Congregation states on its website. “In the years following the Second Vatican Council, the Magisterium has repeatedly spoken of the importance of education, and has also invited the Christian community to play its part in education — particularly in the face of today’s obvious, and often critical, ‘educational emergency.’”

A preliminary “forum” will take place in Paris on June 3 to celebrate the anniversaries

of *Gravissimum Educationis* and *Ex corde Ecclesiae*.

The Congregation disclosed a five-point agenda for the Congress:

- To offer schools and universities a place where they can dialogue and debate about the challenges that the “educational emergency” unavoidably provokes for our societies, educational systems and the Church;
- In light of ethical and religious principles, to draft a written analysis of the above-mentioned challenges and their repercussions for every field of education. All those involved in this important area will thus have a chance to make their contribution;
- In light of the Magisterium, to examine in greater depth the ideas that education is proposing and developing about humanity and society;
- To formulate useful suggestions and guidelines;
- To draft together, as members of the Church, a message that is meaningful, descriptive and challenging.

The Congregation anticipates that Pope Francis will be in attendance on the last day of the Congress and will offer his own words on education. According to the Congregation, the time with the Holy Father is intended “to draw conclusions from what



has emerged during the Congress, looking towards the future with hope and trust, encouraged by the words of Pope Francis.”

Discussion topics have not been disclosed, yet several discussion sessions will be divided into two sub-sessions, one for issues pertaining to colleges and one for schools. The central session on November 18-19 will focus on three major themes of education: the identity and mission of Catholic institutions, the subjects of education, and the formation of teachers.

The Congregation’s meaning of an “educational emergency” is revealed in the *Instrumentum Laboris* issued last year in preparation for the World Congress. Titled *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion*, the document urges improved Catholic identity, promotes teacher training and witness to the Catholic faith, and even appears to oppose workplace-driven mutations like the Common Core State Standards.

The first “challenge” for Catholic elementary and secondary education cited in the *Instrumentum Laboris* is “the challenge of identity,” with emphasis on the fidelity of educators:

Spiritual poverty and declining cultural levels are starting to produce their dismal effects, even within Catholic schools. Often times, authoritativeness is being undermined. It is really not a matter of discipline — parents greatly appreciate Catholic schools because of their discipline — but do some Catholic school heads still have anything to say to students and their families? Is their authority based on formal rules or on the authoritativeness of their testimony? If we want to avert a gradual impoverishment, Catholic schools must be

run by individuals and teams who are inspired by the Gospel, who have been formed in Christian pedagogy, in tune with Catholic schools’ educational project, and not by people who are prone to being seduced by fashionability, or by what can become an easier sell, to put it bluntly.

Another challenge is the preparation of teachers, an increasingly prominent concern in the United States that has led to improvements in teacher contracts and employee handbooks in dioceses around the country — but also the opposition of dissenting teachers and organizations to Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone’s expectations for teachers in San Francisco. To better prepare teachers for Catholic education, the Congregation urges training to ensure that teachers “are willing to embrace and share a specific evangelical identity, as well as a consistent lifestyle.” Expressing concern that “the number of educators as teachers who are believers is shrinking, hence making Christian testimony more rare,” the Congregation seeks ways to ensure that “a bond with Jesus Christ” is established.

As for the content of Catholic education, the Congregation seems to have little regard for economy-driven “reforms” like the Common Core that disregard the integral formation of students, especially moral and spiritual development:

Educating is a lot more than just instructing people. The European Union, OECD and World Bank highlight instrumental reason and competitiveness and have a merely functional view of education, as if it were legitimized only if it served the market economy and the labor market: all this strongly reduces the educational content of many international documents, something



that we see reflected also in several texts issued by education ministries. Schools should not yield to this technocratic and economic rationale, even if they are exposed to outside forces as well as market attempts to use them instrumentally, even more so in the case of Catholic schools. We do not mean in any way to belittle the demands of the economy or unemployment's seriousness, but students need to be respected as integral persons and be helped to develop a multiplicity of skills that enrich the human person, such as creativity, imagination, the ability to take on responsibilities, to love the world, to cherish justice and compassion.

In the United States, there is no shortage of concerns that might be discussed at the World Congress. In the first few months of 2015 alone, there have been several blatant attacks on Catholic education, including groups that have schemed against bishops reinforcing the Catholic identity of their schools and unconstitutional laws which endanger the religious freedom of Catholic schools.

Justin Petrisek
May 11, 2015
Catholic News Service



U.S. Bishops' Leader Says Catholic Schools 'Exist to Proclaim Good News of Jesus Christ'

The very purpose of Catholic schools is to witness to Christ, said Archbishop Joseph Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, this week in an exclusive statement to The Cardinal Newman Society.

"Catholic schools exist to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to all the nations," said Archbishop Kurtz.

Through Catholic school education, students are daily invited to know Jesus personally, to love Him intimately, and to serve Him wholeheartedly. As Pope Francis reminds us in *Evangelii Gaudium*, 'the joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.'"

The question of evangelization — and to what extent Catholic school teachers are expected to uphold the faith both inside and outside the classroom — has been controversial in San Francisco, where dissenting organizations like Call to Action have been provoking opposition to Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone's changes to a faculty handbook. But other dioceses nationwide also have been working to improve Catholic schools by focusing greater attention on Catholic identity.

Archbishop Kurtz highlighted the important role of faithful Catholic teachers in his own life:

I was fortunate enough to have benefitted from great teachers in the Catholic schools I attended from grades 1 to 12 and then, of course, in the seminary. I remember with special regard Sr. Mary Denis Woods, GNSH, who served as both the principal and 7th grade teacher at St. Canicus School. It was in the 6th grade when the idea of serving the Church first came to me, and she was a great support and champion as I began this quest to find God's purpose in my life.

Students also need the help of educators to prepare them to serve God and society.

"Each of us, through baptism, has a vocation," said Archbishop Kurtz.

In order to respond to this vocational call, we need God's grace as well as the help of others in our life who help us recognize how our gifts can be put to God's service.

He continued:

I believe that our Catholic schools are among our most promising institutions to serve as that "village fountain" — St. John XXIII's image evoked in the final message of the 2012 Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization — in which faith, family, and learning come together to provide children and youth with a solid preparation for life, preparing



them to be good citizens of both heaven and earth.

And even non-Catholics agree with this, said Archbishop Kurtz.

“Many others in the broader community assert the benefits of Catholic schools,” he said.

Employers experience good character, discipline, unselfishness, and well-developed skills in Catholic school graduates, and our schools develop future good citizens imbued

with a commitment to the common good.

Such benefits deserve to be celebrated, even in highly secular communities by people who are themselves uninterested in learning the Catholic faith.

“For decades, Catholic schools have made a difference, both in our Church and in the quality of life in our nation,” Archbishop Kurtz said.

Kimberly Scharfenberger
May 5, 2015
Catholic Education Daily



Diocese Launches Multimedia Campaign in Support of Catholic Schools

LAWRENCEVILLE, N.J. — The Bishop of Trenton has a lot of good things to say about the Catholic schools in his Diocese, and he is doing it in a newly-produced video entitled “Catholic Schools Have it All.”

An array of voices and personal stories about Catholic schools back up Bishop David M. O’Connell, C.M., in the 13-minute production that serves as the anchor for a comprehensive, multimedia campaign that began to roll out earlier this month. The CSHIA campaign also includes billboards, posters to be hung in parishes and schools and a dedicated website. Additional elements, such as digital advertising, are also planned.

In the video, Bishop O’Connell shares his family’s stories, and relates how his Catholic school background played a significant part in forming him into who he has become as a man of faith, a priest and now a bishop. He expresses his belief that Catholic schools are a vital part of the future of the Church.

A key part of his message is aimed directly at Catholic parents whose children are not in Catholic school. Bishop O’Connell encourages them to take a close look at Catholic school and fully and prayerfully consider enrolling their children there. He asks families to consider how different their child’s life would be as a result of receiving an education centered on Christ, and he

issues a special invitation to parents of children in parish religious education programs.

But his message is not limited to an appeal for enrollment.

Bishop O’Connell also states, “Catholic schools are every Catholic’s business,” adding that every parishioner, whether they have school-aged children or no children, has a stake in the future of Catholic schools. He urges all Catholics to “find out about your Catholic school; see what is needed there.”

The Bishop specifically mentions Catholic school alumni, encouraging them to reconnect with their Catholic school and “pay forward the gifts you have been given.”

In producing the video, staff and partners of the Diocese’s Department of Radio and Television made a whirlwind tour through schools and churches across Burlington, Mercer, Monmouth and Ocean counties. They captured classroom segments, and taped interviews with pastors, principals, teachers and parents, all who candidly shared their perspectives on the value of Catholic school and the importance of making it a priority.

<http://www.dioceseoftrenton.org>
April 23, 2015



Two Programs Help Students Most in Need

Political apathy leads to missed opportunities to change at least some lives for the better — especially those of the people Jesus referred to as "the least of these," our poor.

Our state and city are at a critical juncture. Philadelphia's urban life is a mix of immense possibility and energy and very serious problems. Some recent reports suggest that Philadelphia is not just the poorest big city in the country, but also the one with the highest rate of deep poverty, defined as afflicting those living on less than \$6,000 per year or raising a child on less than \$7,600 per year.

The lack of quality education is a common thread among people in severe poverty. And once stuck in deep poverty, it's very hard for anyone to escape due to a lack of the skills needed to secure and hold employment.

Education is a vital issue in Pennsylvania politics. The fate of many thousands of children, and to a large extent the future of our city, will be decided over the next few months and years. Philadelphia has some of the highest-performing schools in the Commonwealth. Unfortunately, they're the exception.

Despite many excellent teachers and administrators, more than two-thirds of Philadelphia district schools are on the Commonwealth's list of the poorest-performing schools. The children who attend these troubled schools are overwhelmingly poor and from minority backgrounds. Their chances of finding a way out of poverty as they mature are slim.

Poor parents, like parents everywhere, want their children to grow strong; to have their talents take them as far as they can go. But without a quality education, these hopes will remain unfulfilled, and another generation of deep poverty will persist.

This is painfully ironic because at the moment, thousands of seats sit empty in safe, high-quality Catholic and private schools throughout the region. Lifelines to a good education do exist to help poor families, but, as so often happens, political conflicts stand in the way.

Catholic social teaching is built on a commitment to the poor. Few things are more important to people in poverty than ensuring their children's education as a path to a better life. If the future of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania depends on an educated, productive public — and it obviously does — then providing every means to ensure young people a good education becomes a matter of social justice. Prudent lawmakers from both major parties have understood this for years. They need to feel our support in the voting booth and throughout their public service.

The point is this: Proper funding for public schools is clearly important. But experience has already shown that this can't be the only strategy because it doesn't work for many of the students who most urgently need a good education. It's therefore vital that our elected officials serve the real education needs of the poor by supporting school choice.

Currently in Harrisburg, House Bill 752 proposes to increase the Commonwealth's Educational Improvement Tax Credits to



\$170 million and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credits to \$80 million. Rep. Jim Christiana (R., Beaver) is the prime sponsor. The speaker of the House, Rep. Mike Turzai (R., Allegheny), has identified this legislation as a priority. A number of Democrats and Republicans from the Philadelphia area have co-sponsored the bill.

These successful tax-credit programs fund scholarship organizations that enable tens of thousands of students, including those who are most needy, to attend good schools of their choice. Catholic and other nongovernment schools benefit greatly from these programs — but only indirectly, and only because parents and students freely choose them because of their quality. In fact, many of the students in our inner-city schools who benefit from the tax-credit programs are not Catholic. Our schools welcome them as part of our Gospel commitment to the common good.

With so much at stake in this year's state budget debate, lawmakers need vigorous constituent feedback. Public support for these tax credits, and for the legislators who advance them, is essential to ensuring that these valuable programs, which benefit so many poor families, continue and grow.

Archbishop Charles J. Chaput
April 17, 2015
www.philly.com



The Goal of Classical Education Is Truth

“The least initial deviation from the truth is multiplied later a thousandfold.” Aristotle wrote this in the fourth century B.C. in a text called *On the Heavens*. Sixteen hundred years later Thomas Aquinas began his treatise *On Being and Essence* by paraphrasing Aristotle: “Because a small error in the beginning grows enormous at the end...” The application of this wisdom to the moral life might be rather obvious. Tell a lie once, however small, and you will probably end up telling more. While it’s easy to see, in the realms of space or morality, how a slight error can lead to enormous complications later, these maxims are not only meaningful for astrophysicists and theologians. Teachers and school administrators would do well to reflect on these words as well.

In my classroom, a student will occasionally say something like, “What’s the big deal about a comma? Does it really matter?” A parent might complain when I take a point off their child’s math test because he wrote 28 cm, instead of 28 cm². “Clearly, he knew the answer, as you can see from his work.” The parent is asking the same question: Does it really matter? My answer is always, “Yes, it absolutely matters because 28 centimeters is not the same thing as 28 square centimeters.” That is simply the truth. If teachers don’t communicate this consistently to their students and the students’ parents, we are acquiescing in a tendency toward cavalier mediocrity and the importance of truth withers away. If we decide how we say or write things does not matter, we will soon show the same disregard for what we say or write. Augustine put it another way observing that although rain drops may be small, together

they can swell a river into a flood. This phenomenon is occurring in America’s schools, public and parochial.

How have our nation’s public schools reached the point where many of them no longer teach grammar? It has happened because schools deviated from the truth about language, which Josef Pieper characterized as a participation in truth. This presupposes contemplation and a degree of clarity in articulation. Clarity in written articulation presupposes an order in the symbols used to communicate an idea, what we call language. When schools began prioritizing self-expression, grammar became irksome, restrictive. Language is no longer about a reciprocal participation in truth, a means of communion, but rather a tool forced into the service one’s own sentimental and fickle demands. Commas, apostrophes, and correct capitalization now are seen as anachronistic obstacles rather than manifestations of an order inherent in language that aid clarity and facilitate mutual understanding. It was only a matter of time before grammar was jettisoned altogether. And, since excellence in writing is no longer required, neither is excellence in thinking because the two are inextricably joined. Couple this with an endless selection of graphic organizers and bookless curricula, and who needs to write anymore?

State boards of education packed with ostensible experts also deviated from the truth. When “the test” began demanding knowledge of elements of literature, for example, reading became analysis. Find the theme, graph the plot, describe the resolution. Let’s dispense with the quaint notion of our students sitting down together



to talk about a story, why their hearts cry out for *Oliver Twist* or why they feel conflicted about *Pinocchio*. Training students to explicitly define terms does not foster a love for literature, nor does it provide a means of measuring their ability to understand and engage with a great story. Over time, in fact, it has the opposite effect. It kills the sense of wonder and erodes the imaginative faculty of a child, subsequently causing a gradual closing of their minds to any possibility of supranatural realities. If we want our students to understand how great writers create great literature, let's give them Aristotle's *Poetics* when they are developmentally ready for it.

In the meantime, children should be immersed in the wonderful worlds of fairytale, myth, folklore, and poetry. Focusing young students on the mechanics of a story rather than the story is like giving them a gift and ordering them not to open it to find the surprise hidden inside, but rather to analyze the box, wrapping paper, and ribbon, and then describe it to you in writing, which they will not be able to do because we stopped teaching them how to articulate their thoughts clearly in written language. Proponents of classical education have been warning that the new national standards currently under consideration will turn reading into research, as up to 70 percent of the content mandated will be comprised of informational text. "A small error at the beginning...."

Where did the first small error occur? Jacques Barzun wrote that "the error began with the replacement of the word 'pedagogy' with the word 'education'." Barzun acknowledges a certain lack of beauty in the word pedagogy, but defends it by saying the word "sticks to the point of teaching." The word education, on the other

hand, "properly refers to a completed development, or the whole tendency of the mind toward it." Barzun views this shift as an error because "thinking that we can give an education, we make wild claims and promises and forget to teach what is teachable." Also forgotten, Barzun observes, is that education, properly understood, means the student assumes most of the responsibility, not the teacher. The teacher's responsibility is pedagogy. The result of the confusion leads to writing lessons or art classes, for example, aimed at self-expression merely. Students will become poets and painters while understanding nothing of poetry or technique. Each teacher must, Merlin-like, magically create this transformation. Too many of them think they can because they have been fed a steady diet of the latest methodology — complete with its own system of cryptic terminology — devised by a Ph.D. at a state university. This is where the absurdities originate. The full perspective of education as a twelve- to sixteen-year prospect involving a team comprised of parents, many teachers, and the student himself, is either forgotten or ignored. Never mind memorization, recitation, technique, and grammar. They must express themselves as poets and painters, and they must do so now.

Catholic schools have been affected, too. Catholic institutions ought to be bulwarks against the secular absurdities denigrating public education, yet they have too often been complicit in advancing them. This phenomenon began with the liberalization and subsequent decimation of the religious orders, which had succumbed to the deviant claims of modern feminism. Catholic schools turned to the laity for teachers. But, the Catholic laity was quickly absorbing the errors of moral relativism. Although the external trappings of Catholic identity



remained in place, internally Catholic schools began to resemble public schools. The fact that Catholic School Offices in dioceses all over the country now find it necessary to form committees to assess and develop Catholic identity in their schools is a disheartening indication that something integral to Catholic education has been lost. Other than the school's name and a weekly Mass, parents can no longer be certain their child is, in fact, attending a Catholic school, even if they are paying \$4000 per year in tuition.

Well-intentioned efforts to reverse the deterioration of Catholic education frequently veer into a false dichotomy resulting from the same confusion about pedagogy and education noted by Barzun. It should not be assumed a pastor, or even a bishop, understands education. It's a hard thing to run a school well. However, the leadership of too many Catholic schools began looking to the languishing public sector for ideas. State legislatures are partly to blame for the general decline because, by defining successful education according to an interpretation of data based on flawed standardized tests, they encouraged public and parochial schools to do the same. Thus, Catholic schools have also become susceptible to making false promises about what they can do, and adapted too readily to the standardized demands of the state by uncritically incorporating the methodologies of the "experts." In this Catholic schools have, like the public schools, reduced their students to data points.

This false dichotomy results in monolithic approaches to reform within the school focused either on academics or spiritual formation. Neither extreme is good because it excludes the rightful place of the other, diminishing the value of both. In the first

instance, the Catholic schools become data-driven, test-focused institutions with little concern for each child's soul and ultimate destiny. In the latter case, the pastor assumes a myopic perspective that sees the school only as a seminary for children. Curriculum in such a school is only useful as a means for forming young people who consider no other calling in life but priesthood or religious life. In both scenarios, poor hiring decisions are made which impoverish the overall life of the school both spiritually and intellectually. When the only concern is academics, classrooms are led by men and women who often see Church teaching as optional and the Faith as little more than quaint stories we tell to the little ones. When the only concern is catechesis, classrooms tend to be led by unthinking zealots who make an idol of the Church. The only geometry such teachers concern themselves with is the 90 [degree] angle they expect with each genuflection. They raise the axiom *lex orandi lex credendi* to the height of pharisaical obsession, which leaves the students impoverished intellectually, and skeptical about the Christian message of love.

Catholic schools have their own tradition to pattern their schools upon. That tradition is generally called the liberal arts. In classical terms, it is called the trivium and quadrivium methods. A properly organized Catholic school ought to provide spiritual formation and intellectual formation simultaneously by immersing its students in the manifestations of God's love for us found in the good news of the Gospel, and in the ordered beauty we see all around us, from the atom to the most expansive galaxies in space, from a knowledge of American history to a well-crafted sentence. When I was a middle school teacher at a Catholic school, I used to remind my



colleague who taught math and science that he was, in a certain respect, better positioned to evangelize our students than I was as the religion teacher. My students expected me to talk to them about God and the Church. Yet, to find those same theological truths written into creation itself! What is the study of math, science, and grammar if not the discovery of a rational, intelligible order? It must not be left to the religion teacher alone to evangelize students in a Catholic school. Moreover, we must stop viewing grammar as a boring set of rules. Grammar is the revelation of an order inherent in language which makes possible that “sweet discourse” Adam longs for in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.

Catholic schools can find some useful models for renewal of their own schools within the growing movement toward classical education. There are now many private and charter institutions patterned upon the classical model. Charters like Great Hearts Academies, the writer’s current employer, offer helpful models for intellectual formation. Consulting home schooling organizations, such as Memoria Press with its “classical core curriculum,” would help Catholic schools understand how catechesis and the liberal arts can complement each other. Why is the classical model the right one for Catholic schools? It is the best option because, elevated and redeemed by Catholicism in the Middle Ages, this method of education meets both the spiritual and intellectual needs of the person, it eliminates the confusion between pedagogy and education, and it properly delineates the roles of student, teacher, and school in the formation of a young soul.

Getting first principles wrong means getting much more wrong, too. One first principle is imitation. Students learn to speak, write, paint, and play music well through imitation

of those who have done it well before them. This is part of pedagogy and it is a component of any classical curriculum. The teachers at my classical academy are blessed that we get to teach grammar, spelling, cursive, and sentence diagramming using the sentences of great writers as our models; that we allow our students first to simply listen attentively to Mozart and Beethoven; that we encourage them to marvel at the soaring lines of gothic architecture and try to imitate them; that we reveal to them how Castilian Spanish is also characterized by principles of order, just like English; that we engage them in athletic competition as an exercise in virtue, not just an exercise. And, how blessed our students are at our school that they get to read stories and talk about them, whether they can define “rising action” or not.

Yet, one thing we may not do, since we are not a Catholic academy, is link the pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty to the One Who is truth, goodness, and beauty. The full reformation and redemption of education in America can only be accomplished through a Catholic academy, patterned upon the classical models of the trivium and quadrivium. In the meantime, Catholic parents in my city have a viable school option at least for the intellectual formation of their children in an environment that is not toxic to their child’s soul. Sadly, this is more than many Catholic school parents can say.

Tom Jay
April 15, 2015
Crisis

Tom Jay is a teacher at Archway Classical Academy charter school in Scottsdale, Arizona.



Catholic Schools Are ‘Vehicles’ of Pro-Life Movement, Say Pro-Life Leaders

With a growing emphasis on the Church's pro-life teachings in Catholic education and demand for pro-life curricula, Catholic schools have the opportunity to become indispensable “vehicles” in the pro-life movement, said The Cardinal Newman Society's Dr. Jamie Arthur.

“As an apostolate of the Church, Catholic schools become a vehicle through which pro-life teachings are conveyed and students are given the opportunity to defend the sanctity of life and dignity of the human person,” stated Arthur, manager of the Newman Society's Catholic Education Honor Roll.

“We've talked to a lot of teachers who have told us that they would like to incorporate pro-life principles into their curriculum, but they don't have the time to do all the research,” Cathy Daub told the Newman Society. Daub, director of the American Life League's Culture of Life Studies Program (CLSP), is part of one organization hoping to meet those needs by doing the research that teachers need to be successful in the classroom.

“The beauty of this program is that we work with the best of the best in the pro-life movement — pro-life leaders, lawyers, scientists — and we're marrying them to teachers, home school parents, school administrators,” Daub said.

The CLSP offers educational supplements that can be easily adapted to classroom lessons and even entire courses. “There's

nothing else out there like this program,” Daub said.

There are a lot of virtue-based programs but nothing that is similar to the Culture of Life Studies Program, in that we are taking the experience of those in the pro-life movement and the experience of teachers, home school parents, and administrators in creating these supplements.

“Faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church, all of our supplements use Scripture, the Catechism, and other Church documents to explain and support the Church's position on life issues,” Daub continued. “This battle will only be won by equipping the younger generations with absolute truth and the courage and wisdom to stand up for that truth,” Daub said. “The best way to accomplish this is to bring together teachers with pro-life leaders and subject-matter experts.”

Pro-life education is a “natural fit especially in Catholic schools,” Daub observed.

We are called to witness to the Gospel of Life. We are called to stand up and fight. The CLSP will offer teachers and parents a place to go to both educate themselves and learn how to best communicate the pro-life truths to their students.

Justin Petrisek
March 27, 2015
Catholic Education Daily



Cincinnati Superintendent Defends Notion of Catholic School Teacher as ‘Minister’

Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone’s references to the “ministry” of Catholic education may be controversial in San Francisco, but in other dioceses like the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, the same language is already embraced in Catholic schools.

Teachers in Catholic schools serve an essential function in evangelizing their students and should understand their role as “ministers,” says Jim Rigg, superintendent of Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. The Cardinal Newman Society spoke to him this week about the irreplaceable role that teachers play in spiritually forming their students and the Archdiocese’s strategies in faithful faculty formation.

“To be a Catholic school teacher is to be a minister,” Rigg insisted. “The most important job our teachers have is to evangelize their students. If our teachers are not enabling our students to draw closer to Christ, we are failing in our mission as Catholic educators.”

Rigg has worked in Cincinnati since 2010 as director of educational services and superintendent of schools. Last year, the Archdiocese announced that more explicit language would be included in its teacher contracts, in order to fully convey Church teaching on important issues and to ensure that faculty are well-informed of their responsibilities.

Speaking to the Newman Society, Rigg delved into the duty of Catholic schools to evangelize to the youth, particularly as they form the future of the Catholic Church. “We need to vigorously convey the truth and life

of Jesus Christ,” Rigg said. “We must ensure that our youth are well formed in their faith, and are equipped to boldly evangelize in a world that desperately needs them.”

As more dioceses consider adopting the terms “minister” or “ministry” to apply to the duties of Catholic school teachers, Rigg offered compelling reasons to do so. “Our teachers are the hands, feet, and heart of Jesus to the children that they serve,” he said, adding that Catholic schools “are carrying on the very teaching ministry of Christ, passed on to us through the centuries by the disciples, saints, and countless Catholic teachers who have dedicated their lives to the vocation of Catholic education.”

He stressed that Catholic identity “must be part of the very ethos of the school” and should permeate “every lesson, every relationship, and every communication.”

To aid this effort, the Archdiocese of Cincinnati provides “interview questions designed to measure whether a teacher understands our unique ministry” and offers “diocesan-level trainings for new teachers on the basics of the Catholic faith, with an emphasis on how the teacher can evangelize his/her students.” Starting this fall, the Archdiocese will also provide a new program to impart “what it means to be a ‘teacher-minister,’ and how this ministry directly connects to the ministry of Christ.”

All of these efforts are directly tied to the future of the Church, Rigg indicated. “Our future will be built by our young, who will one day be charged with leading our Church,” he said, noting that evangelizing the youth “can only be achieved by working



in concert with engaged parents and vibrant parishes.”

Though evangelization to the young can be achieved through various forms of schooling and community, Catholic schools in particular “have a tremendous track record of success” with graduates being “more likely to pray daily, attend church regularly, and give back to their church through service and financial donations,” remarked Rigg.

To this effect, Archbishop Cordileone has been acting courageously in the Archdiocese of San Francisco, ensuring that teachers in diocesan Catholic schools are fully aware of Church teaching on modern issues through revised faculty handbooks that provide explication and clarity. His efforts have stirred some controversy in the Archdiocese, but they have also been lauded by numerous teachers and Catholic communities as necessary efforts to protect the Catholic identity of his schools.

Denise Donohue, deputy director of K-12 programs for The Cardinal Newman Society, said that bishops have the prerogative of ensuring “the authentic and

personal integrity of the individuals sharing the Gospel message” in Catholic schools. As such, “all teachers in Catholic schools have the duty and responsibility of sharing the Good News and evangelizing the hearts of their students.”

She continued:

Stepping into a Catholic school, one should get the impression that they are in a unique and different environment. It’s not only the environment, but the community and culture of a Catholic school that is unique, in part because of the personal witness of those individuals working within the school.

Bearing this in mind, more dioceses affirming their faculty’s responsibility of evangelizing students will lead to more faithful Catholic schools—something that is “essential for the future of the Church,” Rigg concluded.

Kimberly Scharfenberger
March 27, 2015
Catholic Education Daily



Pope's Address to Italian Catholic Teachers Union (UCIIM)

VATICAN CITY, March 16, 2015 (Zenit.org) — Here below is a translation of Pope Francis' address to members of the Italian Catholic Union of School Teachers (UCIIM) Saturday at noon in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall:

Dear gentlemen and lady colleagues,

Allow me to call you thus, because like you, I also was a teacher and I have a lovely memory of the days spent in the classroom with students. I greet you cordially and I thank the president for his courteous words.

Teaching is a very beautiful work. It's too bad that teachers are poorly paid, because it's not only the time they spend in the school. They must prepare themselves, they must think of each one of the pupils: how to help them to go forward. Isn't it so? It's an injustice. I think of my country, which is the one I know: poor things, to have a stipend that is more or less useful, they must work two sessions! However, how does a teacher end the day after coping with two sessions? It's a badly paid job, but very beautiful because it enables us to see the persons entrusted to our care grow day after day. It's somewhat like being parents, at least spiritually. It's also a great responsibility.

Teaching is a serious endeavor, which only a mature and balanced personality can undertake. Such a commitment can strike fear in one's heart, but one must recall that no teacher is alone: he always shares his work with his colleagues and with all the educational community to which he belongs.

Your association has completed 70 years: it's a good age! It's right to celebrate, but one also can begin to evaluate the life.

When you were born, in 1944, Italy was still at war. Since then, it's made quite some progress! The school has also made progress. And Italian schools went forward thanks also to the contribution of your Association, which was founded by Professor Gesualdo Nosengo, a teacher of religion who felt the need to gather the secondary school teachers at that time, who acknowledged their Catholic faith and work in the school with this inspiration.

Over all these years, you've made the country grow, you contributed to reform schools and, above all, you contributed, educating generations of young people.

Italy has changed in 70 years, schools have changed, but there are always teachers ready to commit themselves in their profession with the enthusiasm and willingness that faith in the Lord gives us.

As Jesus taught us, the whole Law and the Prophets are summarized in two Commandments: love your Lord God and love your neighbor (Cf. Matthew 22:34-40). We could ask ourselves: Who is a teacher's neighbor? His "neighbors" are his students! It is with them that he spends his day. They are the ones who expect guidance from him, direction, an answer and, even before that, good questions!

Among the UCIIM's tasks, which cannot be lacking, is a correct idea of the school, clouded sometimes by reductive discussions and positions. The school is certainly about



valid and qualified instruction, but also about human relations, which on our part are relations of hospitality, of benevolence, to be given to all indistinctly. In fact, the duty of a good teacher — all the more so if he is a Christian teacher — is that of loving with greater intensity the more difficult, the weaker and the more disadvantaged pupils. Jesus would say: if you love only those who study, who are well behaved, what merit have you? And if there are those that make us lose our patience, we must love them more! Any teacher is at ease with these students. I ask you to love the “difficult” students more, those who don’t want to study, those who are in conditions of hardship, the disabled, the foreigners, who today are a great challenge for the schools.

If a professional association of Christian teachers wants to witness its own inspiration, it is called to commit itself in the peripheries of the school, which cannot be abandoned to marginalization, ignorance and a bad life. In a society that struggles to find points of reference, it is necessary that young people find a positive reference in the school. It can do so or become so if it has within itself teachers that are capable of giving meaning to the school, to study and to culture, without reducing everything only to the transmission of technical knowledge, but aiming to build an educational relation with each one of the students, who must feel accepted and loved for who he is, with all his limitations and potentiality. In this sense, your task is all the more necessary. And you must teach not only the contents of a subject, but also the values of life and habits of life — the three things you must transmit. To learn the content, a computer is sufficient, but to understand how one loves, to understand what the values and habits are that create harmony in society, a good teacher is necessary.

The Christian community has so many examples of great educators who dedicated themselves to fill the voids of school formation or founded schools in turn. Among others, we think of Saint John Bosco, the bicentenary of whose birth we observe this year. He counselled his priests: educate with love. The first attitude of an educator is love. It is to these figures, you also can look, Christian teachers, to animate from within a school that — leaving out of consideration of its State or non-State management — is in need of credible educators and witnesses of a mature and complete humanity. Witness — and this is not purchased, it’s not sold: it’s offered.

As an association you are by nature open to the future, because there are always new generations of young people to whom to transmit the patrimony of knowledge and values. On the professional plane, it’s necessary to update one’s own didactical competencies, also in the light of the new technologies; however, teaching is not only a job: teaching is a relation in which every teacher must feel totally involved as a person, to give meaning to the educational task to ones’ pupils. Your presence here today is proof that you have those motivations of which the school is in need.

I encourage you to renew your passion for man — one cannot teach without passion! — in his process of formation, and to be witnesses of life and of hope. Never, never close a door; open all of them wide, so that students will have hope.

I ask you, also, to pray for me and invite you all, to pray to Our Lady, asking for Her blessing.

May 7, 2013



Pedaling Catholic Education

Father James Sullivan was ordained in May 2014 for the Archdiocese of Hartford, Conn. His journey took him from co-owning a home-contracting company with his brother to the priesthood. Today, he serves a group of parishes in Torrington, Conn.

In an earlier interview with the Register, he described his vocational discernment: “The Lord called, and the desire then became so strong that no other vocation for the remainder of my life even seemed remotely a consideration. So I gave my half of the business to my brother. He’s doing fine, and he’s very happy that I pursued this. He and my family and many friends all knew this day was coming, but God had not yet revealed it to me. When I meet the Lord one day, rather than ask, ‘Why now?’ I’m simply going to say, ‘Thank you, Lord, for the beautiful gift of priesthood you’ve given me.’”

Now, his love for the priesthood and Catholic education combine with his lifelong interest in bicycling in “Our Father’s Ride,” which he is leading this spring.

How and why did you form “Our Father’s Ride”?

Being a new priest and a priest in a parish with a school, I have quickly come to love and appreciate Catholic education even more than I have in the past. I have a great love for the children in the school, too. My own love for the Church was developed and nurtured greatly by my own Catholic education as a child.

It’s no secret that the majority of schools need significant fundraising efforts in order to operate properly. Speaking recently to my sister, Sister Veronica Mary Sullivan of the Sisters of Life, about this, she knew how much I loved bicycle riding — I’ve been an avid bike rider all my life. She said, “Why don’t you do that to raise funds and to promote the school?”

We decided to have a destination. We picked Emmitsburg, Md., because of the connection with Sister Elizabeth Ann Seton, who is credited with beginning the parochial school system in the United States. This ride and destination — the National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Emmitsburg — is going to be a pilgrimage of prayer for the school and an opportunity to raise funds for it.

All of a sudden, the plan seemed to grow. How did that happen?

I said to myself, “If I’m going on this ride, why ride alone?” As I talked to other people, it began to develop it. Based on the desire to promote the schools and the face of Catholic education, as well as the financial needs that we have, I also thought it would put a wonderful face on the priesthood, having priests ride for their schools.

I met with our Archbishop Leonard Blair, and he gave us his blessing and support. I met with Dale Hoyt, the superintendent of Catholic schools for the archdiocese and his staff, and they are extremely excited about it. I have their full support.

Now, we developed the website, which came out on Jan. 21.



When will this pilgrimage ride take place?

We're leaving on May 29, from our [St. Peter/St. Francis] school in Torrington and riding seven miles to the Lourdes in Litchfield Shrine in Litchfield, Conn. I'm going to ride myself, and the older school children, the principal of the school and parents are going to be riding with me for those seven miles through the scenic Litchfield landscape to the shrine.

Other priests will join me there. We will have the formal sendoff at 10 a.m., after Morning Prayer and the blessing of the bikes. Then we'll travel 50 miles a day, which is considered a moderate distance, so as to include those riders who might be a little older but still in good riding shape who would like to join us in the ride. For this ride, a priest needs to be in reasonable shape but doesn't need to be an athlete.

Who will the riders be?

It is for priests and seminarians. Each priest will be riding for his own school, so there is the incentive to raise as much funds as possible for his school, through per-mile sponsorships by individuals and businesses. We have 58 schools in the Archdiocese of Hartford. I plan to call each of them to see if a priest can ride from that parish. If a priest isn't able to, we're including the seminarians, so a seminarian can ride for the particular school.

We have just begun promoting the ride, and, already, we have six priests interested. Each one has started to get into shape and propose the idea to businesses and individual sponsorships.

What are you personally aiming to raise for your school?

My goal is to raise between \$100,000 and \$150,000. In Torrington, we already have a \$25,000 matching-gift donor. I think other schools can do the same. It's such a unique fundraising opportunity that people will gravitate to it.

It's one thing to ask a person for a \$100 donation for the school. It's an entirely different question to ask, "Will you support me in a pilgrimage of prayer for our school if your priest is riding 350 miles? Will you give me 35 cents a mile?"

People are already saying, "Father, I would love to help you on this." They see their priest putting in a strong effort out of love for the school.

Every priest will be riding for his own school.

Is this only for priests and seminarians from your diocese?

We're inviting priests from all over Connecticut and from "wherever." As we go through New York, we hope to pick up New York priests; the same from New Jersey and Pennsylvania. We're going to contact the bishops of other dioceses along the route for their support.

Priests anywhere, from up to 500 miles from the national shrine, can also join us. We all will meet there on the same day. We already seem to have some interest from priests in other dioceses.

It's going to take us seven days — 50 miles a day. The route is all planned [a map appears on the website]. It's on scenic roads not heavily traveled. Only priests coming from different locations — leaving from



Ohio, for example — will have to coordinate their own route

We'll be staying at hotels and have Mass each morning before starting out. We'll arrive in Emmitsburg on June 4, spend the night at the Mount St. Mary's Seminary, have prayer, dinner and an evening of priestly fraternity; and then, the next morning, Friday, June 5, we will meet at the National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, for Mass, lunch and then departure. So it's a one-way bike trip. We're taking a bus back to Connecticut. The bikes will go back by truck.

Are you doing anything special along the way so that people know these are priests riding?

We're riding in our clerics. Bike shorts are black anyway. We're going to have very safe orange reflector shirts and beneath that V-neck to see our black clerical shirts and the collar. So we're going to ride as priests and seminarians. That's going to be very unique. Hopefully, we'll be seeing 50 to 100 priests riding together.

Do you have any goals for along the way?

If any Catholic schools in the towns we are going through would like it, we will stop in maybe during the school day to give a talk about the ride itself and about Catholic education. This is a way to let them [the children and parents] see the love priests have for Catholic schools.

Since school will be in session, every day we're going to Skype the schools we're all riding for. Before the school day starts, the kids are going to see how we're doing and where we are, so they can follow us along the way.

We'll be praying for them, so students can pray for us while we're riding. It's going to generate a lot of enthusiasm, not only among clergy, but among students and parents.

Have you done much long-distance bicycling yourself?

I've done bike riding for many years in different parts of the country. My bike is a 1990 Cannondale made in Connecticut. It turns 25 this year! My bike has essentially ridden around the world.

My bike riding is an opportunity for a retreat, a time of prayer and contemplation. I've been doing that for years and years. On a number of occasions, I rode to the National Shrine of Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, Mass., on a pilgrimage of prayer.

In the '90s, before becoming a deacon, I rode from the Basilica of Notre Dame in Montreal to my home in Connecticut and stopped at many churches along the way. Whenever I saw a Catholic church, I stopped in and said a prayer.

What are your overall hopes for this pilgrimage ride?

It's for Catholic education, and, at the same time, it's also to promote the priesthood, vocations and priestly fraternity, not to mention good health. I really think we're going to have a wonderful time together as priests.

I believe this pilgrimage can, by God's grace, be tremendously successful, wonderful for both the priesthood and for Catholic education.



Joseph Pronechen
January 26, 2015

National Catholic Register



China Loves Our Catholic Schools

Bill Donohue comments on China's embrace of our Catholic schools:

A delegation of top Chinese educators wanting to learn about the achievement of U.S. elementary and secondary schools decided not to visit a single public school district. Instead, they ventured yesterday to West Virginia to learn more about the stunning success of schools in the Catholic Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

An entourage of educators from Wenzhou, China, visited Wheeling Central Catholic High School, the Challenger Learning Center at Wheeling Jesuit University, and St. Michael Parish School in Wheeling. They came to observe classes and learn more about curricula, teacher training, student development, and school safety. They also sought to foster a student exchange program between the two cities.

The Chinese dignitaries chose the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston schools because of the academic excellence that they provide. As is true nationwide of Catholic schools, almost all the students in the diocese graduate and are accepted in a college or

university. Its students consistently score higher on standardized tests than both West Virginia public school students and the national average.

Chinese educators will never visit the public schools in Paterson, New Jersey. Figures just released show that of a total of almost 26,000 students in grades K-12, exactly 19 of them earned SAT scores that are considered college ready. That is a success rate of .0007 percent. Moreover, 66 employees who work in the Paterson school district earn at least \$125,000 a year.

The most reliable socio-economic ladder in the U.S., especially for minorities, is the Catholic schools. The Chinese Communists know it. So why don't minority leaders and urban mayors, as well as the president? Why do they continually oppose vouchers for Catholic schools? They may not intend to keep minorities in their place, but what they do surely has that effect.

December 2, 2014
www.catholicleague.org



Omaha Archdiocese Unveils \$2 million 'Awaken Greatness' Marketing Campaign for Catholic Schools

Archbishop George Lucas and Patrick Slattery, superintendent of the Omaha Archdiocese's schools, took turns in front of a classroom of uniformed fourth-graders Tuesday to launch a new \$2 million plan for marketing Catholic schools in northeast Nebraska.

The campaign, "Awaken Greatness," focuses on the difference a Catholic education can make in the lives of students. Funding for the campaign comes from the \$40 million "Ignite the Faith" capital campaign the archdiocese launched publicly in January. That campaign, which now has met its goal, included \$23 million to support Catholic education in the archdiocese's 23-county area.

Lucas said the archdiocese is blessed with many strong Catholic schools that partner with parents in teaching academics and sharing the faith.

"We're aware, though, that we could be partnering with even more families," he said, speaking at All Saints School near 10th and Pierce Streets.

The campaign, he said, is intended to reach out to families who aren't using the schools and "to invite them in to get to know us and partner with us" in educating their children. Slattery said the campaign will use advertising and social media as well as word-of-mouth messaging to get the word out over the next two years.

While one objective will be to fill seats in schools, the archdiocese's broader goal is to

let people know what the schools have to offer: High-quality academics accompanied by a focus on discipline, confidence and values. The campaign's tagline reads, "We teach the biggest subjects."

"I've had some folks say it's the best-kept secret in town," Slattery said. "It's an excellent product. It shouldn't be a secret."

Test scores at the schools consistently are higher than state and national averages, according to the archdiocese. High school graduation rates are above 98 percent, including among students from inner-city schools where a majority qualify for free- and reduced price meals. More than 96 percent of archdiocese high school graduates pursue a post-high school education, archdiocese officials said.

But Slattery said the schools' story goes beyond academics.

"Our academic success is realized because we're putting the heart first," he said.

The campaign is one of several major initiatives that have emerged from the archdiocese's strategic vision for Catholic education, which also is serving as a working strategic plan for the Catholic Schools Office that Slattery heads.

Enrollment this year across the archdiocese's 70 schools — 17 high schools and 53 grade schools — is about 18,900 this year, down from 19,100 last year.



Slattery said the pattern of decline is consistent over the past 10 years but has not been as steep as the national average.

He said the archdiocese estimates that schools in the metropolitan area alone could fill 800 more seats without hiring more staff. Pastors this year reported more than 53,000 school-age Catholic children across the archdiocese.

The archdiocese will be creating a brand ambassador program for all 70 schools. That means establishing marketing committees, in many cases volunteers, for all schools and sharing best practices. The program would include drafting parent ambassadors who can help spread the word.

The Archdiocese of Chicago has used a number of such approaches since the mid-2000s to increase marketing and enrollment efforts at its schools. That archdiocese created the Archdiocesan Marketing and Enrollment Network, or AMEN, to provide professional development and hands-on instruction for school administrators, marketing and admissions staff, school board members and others.

Since then, enrollment has stabilized, declining only about 1 percent a year vs. 5 percent or more a decade ago, said Maria Ippolito, the archdiocese's director of school marketing and communications.

Slattery said the Omaha Archdiocese will assess the impact of its efforts along the way and tweak its approach if necessary. While he acknowledged some parents may have concerns about the cost of the schools, he encouraged them to come talk to principals, pastors and staff in his office. In 2014, families received \$10 million in financial aid to attend the schools.

“We want to make this a reality for families,” he said.

Other strategic initiatives under way in the archdiocese:

» Schools are working to create individual strategic plans.

» The schools office is seeking a Latino school enrollment coordinator to bolster outreach to Latinos, part of the archdiocese's larger aim of increasing Latino enrollment.

» Slattery and his staff are working on a blended learning initiative to combine distance learning and classroom instruction.

» Eight teachers, selected for their leadership potential, have begun a leadership program at Creighton University to train to become principals.

Julie Anderson
December 2, 2014
Omaha.com



Parents Fight Back Against Teachers' Union Suing Florida's Largest School Choice Program

Teachers' unions in Florida continue to threaten the educational opportunity of thousands of the state's most vulnerable children.

But there is some good news: Leon County Circuit Court Judge George S. Reynolds III granted parents of these children the right to intervene on behalf of their children's scholarships, which are awarded through the corporate tuition tax credit scholarship program.

"All three [of my] children are excelling academically and socially in their respective schools under the scholarships," said Cheryl Joseph, a mother of three scholarship recipients and one of 15 parents who were granted a motion to intervene in the lawsuit. Cheryl, like the other parents who filed, will not be able to send her children to their chosen school without the scholarship funding.

In August, the Florida Education Association and allies — including the Florida School Boards Association, the PTA, Americans United for Separation of Church and State and others — filed two lawsuits challenging the state's 13-year-old Tuition Tax Credit Scholarship program.

The first suit claimed that the scholarship violates the "no aid" clause and the "uniform public schools" clause of the state's constitution by allowing students to take the aid to private schools, some with religious affiliation.

The second lawsuit argued that the expansion of the scholarship program by lawmakers in June violated legislative procedure because it didn't pass as a standalone measure; rather, the legislation included a variety of education-related topics — including the passage of Florida's first education savings account program. However, this lawsuit was dismissed by Leon County circuit court judge Charles Francis in September.

The court found that the unions did not have standing to challenge the law, freeing nearly 1,000 students to begin using their education saving account school choice option (Personal Learning Scholarship Accounts in Florida) and allowing the Tax Credit Scholarship eligibility to expand.

Despite this win for educational choice, the unions continue their attack on Florida's popular Tax Credit Scholarship option by opposing parents of scholarship students' motion to intervene and the state's motion to dismiss.

Enacted in 2001, the tax credit scholarships have enabled nearly 400,000 Florida students to attend a school of choice. This year businesses contributed \$357.8 million to non-profit groups providing scholarships to 68,761 children to attend a private school of choice — most of whom are low-income minority children. Eligible children are from households with incomes of no more than 185 percent of the federal poverty line.

Under the recently expanded tuition tax credit scholarship program, families at 260



percent of the federal poverty line, or \$62,010 for a household of four, will be eligible for partial scholarships during the 2016-17 school year.

The union suit implies that taxpayers are forced to support parochial education through public funds, but this is not the way tax credit scholarships work.

“Scholarship Tax Credit laws are privately administered programs that rely on the voluntary contributions of corporate taxpayers who receive tax credits in return. As the U.S. Supreme Court ruled, these funds never become public funds because they do not ‘come into the tax collector’s hands,’” writes Cato Institute education policy analyst Jason Bedrick.

In the case of Florida, private corporate donations — not public funds — make up the funding for the scholarships. Businesses receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for contributions to non-profits that administer the scholarship.

A similar suit was filed by the teachers union in New Hampshire last year. But in August, the New Hampshire Supreme Court unanimously upheld the tax credit scholarship, ruling that the plaintiffs did not have standing because the scholarships were funded through private contributions and could not prove any individual harm caused by the scholarships.

The Florida scholarships allow the most economically disadvantaged children to choose an educational environment that best meets their needs. According to Step Up for Students, the non-profit administering the scholarships, 54 percent of the scholarship children are from single-parent households and have an average household income of \$24,067.

These children are succeeding with their scholarships. Research conducted by Dr. David Figlio in 2011 found that students enrolled in the scholarship program performed slightly better than their peers in reading and math achievement levels. Other research suggests that the public schools in Florida are improving because of increased competition from the state’s various school choice options.

It is a disappointment that teachers union heads continue to threaten the educational opportunity of Florida’s most disadvantaged students, despite evidence suggesting academic improvement for students in the program and in traditional public schools. The court was right to grant parents of scholarship students the right to intervene in the suit—it is their children’s future that is at stake.

Brittany Corona
The Heritage Foundation



Book Review:

Ten Practices of Effective Boards: A Unique Tale about Board Governance.

This fable about a school established by a collection of canines typical of most suburban neighborhoods is designed to provide the members of a Christian school board with a humorous look at some of the most critical challenges that face boards as they wrestle with the dynamics of their responsibilities. The narrative format was chosen to provide boards with a creative vehicle to stimulate discussion about effective leadership.

These engaging and entertaining canine tales make the case for effective board governance. The ten specific and grace-filled practices are brilliant in their diagnosis and treatment of the Board through proven principles of operational excellence. All board members should prayerfully and carefully read this book.

The outcome of reading this book will be the opportunity for a single board member to consider his participation in the life of his school and the opportunity for the entire board to have common ground for the meaningful discussion of vital tenets of effective school governance. Each chapter will examine one of these primary concepts by presenting them in the life of a group of neighborhood dogs who are motivated to establish a school in order that their puppies “learn to obey the Master.” Each chapter can be discussed in isolation though it flows with the overall narrative.

Ken S. Coley, Ph.D.

<https://kencoley.wordpress.com/2013/07/19/dr-coleys-new-book-coming-this-fall/>



Why I Send My Kids to Catholic School

I have a set of twins, Noah and Naomi, in first grade at Sacred Heart Catholic School in Pinellas Park, Florida. I put them in Catholic school for kindergarten, and now my intention is to have them in Catholic school all the way to attending the University of Notre Dame.

I made the choice of Sacred Heart because of several different experiences, but not because I or the twins are Catholic. I don't have a home church, and I go between Catholic and Baptist churches. I can't say what religion my twins will end up being, but I can say they enjoy religion. Whether it's a Baptist or Catholic church, they want to go and be a part of it.

But I've sent Noah and Naomi to Sacred Heart primarily because of experiences in my family and experiences with public schools. I got interested in the school because I have nieces who have been there for some time. I watched my nieces growing up and reading to my kids at an early age, and it made me want to have my kids attend there as well.

I have older children — a daughter who's 22 and a son who's 17 — and they were in the public school system. That school decided they would hold back my son in third grade because he had trouble with reading, but I didn't find out my son was having trouble — and could have had tutoring — until he didn't pass. They should have addressed the problem earlier and made it less uncomfortable for him to be at a different level than his classmates, but they didn't. They waited for him to fail before they said, oh, he can't read. I had a problem with that.

In Sacred Heart (which became a Notre Dame ACE Academy a couple of years ago), they care about the student every step of the way, and they find a way to work with the kids. I know Noah is reading at a different level now than Naomi, but the teachers have put in extra time to give him one-on-one help. They didn't wait for the school year to be over.

The school becoming an ACE Academy has helped a lot, certainly with the money that's now available for extra programs, including the free after-school care. As a single parent, a working parent, the extended hours help make it possible for me to work full-time. And I'm thankful for Florida's (tax-credit) scholarships, so I can send the kids to get a great education and pay the light bill and feed them and have a place for them to live.

Sacred Heart has open houses and events to recruit new students, and the students and teachers have very diverse backgrounds. Kids don't learn bad behaviors like racism. By having a common denominator, which is God, people can see past their differences and other barriers. The parents are invited to get to know the teachers and staff, and you're acclimated into the family quite quickly.

One thing I love is that the teachers, even at different grade levels, know my kids. They know the parents, too, and they'll reach out and say hello and "have a great day." That doesn't happen in public school.

Sacred Heart may not have all the resources some public schools have, but they utilize the resources they have to the best of their ability. The teachers are always seeking new



options to help the kids. And they care about their whole lives, about them going to college and going to heaven. In public school, the kids might talk about what they want to be, but you don't often hear them say they want to attend college. My kids, at seven years old, are already saying they want to attend college.

Having God in the school makes these kids grow into great people. It's not about being indoctrinated into any one religion. Sacred Heart teaches the kids to respect others and their religions, too. That's good because my family is unique and dynamic — very open-minded on religion.

When my kids come home, they tell me their experiences with church and school subjects, and they learn from both. I think it helps with behavior. Once they know what

God expects of them, they want to please God as well, and they want to please others, and they want their parents to be happy and proud of them.

Even if I can't keep the twins in Catholic school throughout their education, I know they have the greatest start they could have in life.

Ramona Denmark
January 28, 2015
Special to *Crux*

Ramona Denmark is the mother of two students in Sacred Heart School in Pinellas Park, Fla. Sacred Heart is one of two schools in the Diocese of St. Petersburg that adopted the Notre Dame ACE Academies model for a comprehensive university-school partnership in 2012.



Cardinal Newman and Pope Francis: Catholic Schools as Key to an Educated Laity

This lecture was delivered by the Reverend Peter M. J. Stravinskis, Ph.D., S.T.D., for the 2015 National Newman Conference at Seton Hall University, 31 July 2015.

Precis:

When people hear the name of Cardinal Newman, one of the first associations they make is to his Idea of a University. However, it is rarely known that his first love was Catholic education at the elementary and secondary levels, so that the Oratory School he founded has been described as the "apple of his eye." Interestingly, Pope Francis is the first pontiff in modern history, at least, to have taught high school (chemistry and Latin) and who has reflected extensively on his own personal experiences of being raised by the Salesian Fathers in Argentina. Both Newman and Francis would regard Catholic elementary and secondary schools as essential to producing what Newman repeatedly referred to as "an educated laity" — equally essential for what St. John Paul II dubbed "the new evangelization."

Introductory Remarks

When I first received the call for papers for this conference and saw that we were being asked to see Cardinal Newman and Pope Francis as mirror images of each other, I thought the organizers had carried attempts at the so-called "Francis effect" a bit too far. After all, in terms of philosophical and theological acumen, cultural sensibility, homiletic skills, educational achievement, Francis can't hold a candle to Newman —

and I suspect Francis himself would be the first to agree. On second consideration, however, I paid greater heed to the last item in the conference theme — "the role of the faithful," which I presume here to mean "the lay faithful." Ah, now there is a point of convergence between the two men.

Who could forget Newman's retort to his Bishop when asked about the place of the laity in the Church: "The Church would look foolish without them."¹ An uncharacteristically laconic response for Newman but a line one could easily imagine tripping off the tongue of Francis. Which leads to the next question: If the Church would look foolish without the laity, what kind of laity would redound to her edification and effectiveness? Again, Newman tells us in that well-known desideratum of his:

I want a laity, not arrogant, not rash in speech, not disputatious, but men who know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where they stand, who know what they hold, and what they do not, who know their creed so well, that they can give an account of it, who know so much of history that they can defend it. I want an

¹Wilfrid Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912), 497.



intelligent, well-instructed laity. . . .

And what will such a “well-instructed laity” accomplish? In words presaging what Pope John Paul II would identify as “the new evangelization,” we read:

And one immediate effect of your being able to do all this will be your gaining that proper confidence in self which is so necessary for you. You will then not even have the temptation to rely on others, to court political parties or particular men; they will rather have to court you. You will no longer be dispirited or irritated. . . . , at finding difficulties in your way, in being called names, in not being believed, in being treated with injustice. You will fall back upon yourselves; you will be calm, you will be patient. Ignorance is the root of all littleness. . . . , [it] becomes, from the very necessity of the case, philosophical, long-suffering, and magnanimous.²

But, how to get this “well-instructed laity” to bring about what today we call “the new evangelization,” that living and preaching of the Gospel in formerly Christian lands? We have the answer in Newman’s establishment of the Catholic University of Ireland, to be sure, but likewise (and even especially) in

²*On the Present Position of Catholics in England* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908), 390-391.

his founding of the Oratory School in Birmingham.

In this entire process of forming a laity to represent Christ, His Gospel and His Church with consistency and fruitfulness through Catholic schooling, we find echoes in the life and ministry of Mario Jorge Bergoglio, as we shall presently see. First, however, let us listen to a rarely-quoted text of the Second Vatican Council’s Decree on Christian Education, which admirably summarizes what Newman thought and what Francis thinks about Catholic schooling:

The influence of the Church in the field of education is shown in a special manner by the Catholic school. No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth. But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through baptism as they develop their own personalities, and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and man is illumined by faith. . . . Since, therefore, the Catholic school can be such an aid to the fulfillment of the mission of the People of God and to the



fostering of the dialogue between the Church and mankind, to the benefit of both, it retains even in our present circumstances the utmost importance. . . . The Council also reminds Catholic parents of the duty of entrusting their children to Catholic schools wherever and whenever it is possible and of supporting these schools to the best of their ability and of cooperating with them for the education of their children.

. . . This Sacred Council of the Church earnestly entreats pastors and all the faithful to spare no sacrifice in helping Catholic schools fulfill their function in a continually more perfect way, and especially in caring for the needs of those who are poor in the goods of this world or who are deprived of the assistance and affection of a family or who are strangers to the gift of faith. (*Gravissimum Educationis*, nn. 8-9, *passim*)

Newman on Catholic Schools

Cardinal Newman's commitment to Catholic higher education logically demanded a commitment to Catholic education at the earlier levels. After all, a Catholic university needs a natural "feeder." And so, within fourteen years of Newman's conversion, he established the Oratory School, intended as a Catholic Eton, precisely "to create an intelligent and well-

instructed laity."³ Michael Hickson then describes life at the institution that was undoubtedly "the apple of [Newman's] eye":

Newman took a leading role in each stage of the school's development. Far from being the distant founder and aloof administrator, Newman was active in the everyday life of the school. Once a month, all the boys were required to sit through an examination given by Newman and the Headmaster, Ambrose St. John. Both Newman and St. John played instruments in the school's orchestra, Newman taking the part of second fiddle. Most lively of all, however, was Newman's participation in the school plays.

Let me provide some additional vignettes.

Lord Acton observed: "The School is beginning, with great hopes indeed, but in a small way."⁴ An "Old Boy" of the School, Arthur Hungerford Pollen, recalled:

At the Oratory we saw a good deal of the Cardinal. Nothing pleased him more than making friends with the boys, and the many opportunities we had of personal contact with him made the friendship

³Michael Hickson, "A Cardinal Performance," *Newman Studies Journal*, Spring 2005, 79-82.

⁴Wilfrid Meynell, *Cardinal Newman* (London: Burns and Oates, 1907), 86.



a real one. Of course, to us he was the greatest of heroes. Slight and bent with age, with head thrust forward, and a quick firm gait, the great Oratorian might often be seen going from corridor to corridor, or across the school grounds. His head was large, the pink biretta made it seem still more so, and he carried it as if the neck were not strong enough for the weight. . . . In the Latin plays which he had prepared for the boys to act he always took the keenest interest, insisting on the careful rendering of favourite passages, and himself giving hints in cases of histrionic difficulty. In the school chapel he from time to time appeared, giving a short address, and assisting at the afternoon service. It is curious that it should have been in connexion with these two widely different occupations that we should have seen most of him. It is, perhaps, characteristic of his disposition, in which playfulness and piety were so sweetly combined.⁵

And Cardinal Newman himself, in an 1862 letter to the President of the seminary at Maynooth, gave this estimate of the project:

I am overworked with various kinds of mental labour, and I cannot do as much as I once could. Yet it

would be most ungrateful to complain, even if I were seriously incommoded, for my present overwork arises from the very success of a school which I began here shortly after I retired from the [Irish] University. When we began it was a simple experiment, and lookers-on seemed to be surprised when they found we had in half a year a dozen; but at the end of our third year we now have seventy. . . . As all other schools are increasing in number, it is a pleasant proof of the extension of Catholic education.⁶

So strong was Blessed Newman's advocacy on behalf of Catholic schools, that in 1879 the Archbishop of Sydney, Roger Bede Vaughan, solicited his assistance for the cause in Australia. To which the new Cardinal replied:

. . . I feel it a great honour on the part of Your Grace, that you have made use, in the Pastorals, which you have had the goodness to send me, of what I had occasion to say at Rome last May on the subject of the special religious evil of the day. It pleased me to find that you could make it serviceable in the anxious conflict in which you are at this time engaged in defence of Christian education. It is indeed the gravest of questions whether

⁵Meynell, 86f.

⁶Meynell, 89.



our people are to commence life with or without adequate instruction in those all-important truths which ought to colour all thought and to direct all action; — whether they are or are not to accept this visible world for their God and their all, its teaching as their only truth, and its prizes as their highest aims; — for, if they do not gain, when young, that sacred knowledge which comes to us from Revelation, when will they acquire it?⁷

How effective was Newman in achieving his goals for the Oratory School? Perhaps the best way to gauge that is to eavesdrop on the encomia given him by the Oratory School community on the occasion of his creation as a cardinal. His responses are equally informative.

The representative of the Oratory School Society observed:

Just twenty years ago you generously founded the Oratory School, and you have always cheerfully shared in the burden of toil and self-sacrifice which that act has entailed. We, on our part, gratefully acknowledge the benefits derived from the privilege of your personal influence and guidance after the wise and gentle way of

⁷Reply of Cardinal Newman to Archbishop Vaughan, 16 November 1879.

St. Philip.⁸

The new Cardinal acknowledged that the project was the cause of “much weariness and anxiety,” but went on to assert:

Nothing indeed is more pleasant than the care of boys; at the same time nothing involves greater responsibility. A school such as ours is a pastoral charge of the most intimate kind. . . . In order to the due formation of their minds, boys need that moral and intellectual discipline which school alone can give. Their parents then make a great sacrifice, and also make an act of supreme confidence, in committing their dear ones to strangers.

Then, with a most priestly heart, he places the role of the priest in a Catholic school directly within one’s pastoral ministry and gives it preeminence: “No other department of the pastoral office requires such sustained attention and such unwearied services. A confessor for the most part knows his penitents only in the confessional, and perhaps does not know them by sight. A parish priest knows indeed the members of his flock individually, but he sees them only from time to time.”

At a very intimate level, Newman sums up his reaction to the assessment of his laudators: “You see now why it is that the few words of your Address are so great a comfort to me. Yes — they are a definite

⁸20 July 1879.



formal answer to the questionings, searchings of heart, and anxieties of twenty years.”

A day later, the Mothers of the Oratory School expressed their gratitude “for the great services you have rendered to the Church, and, as parents, for the character and tone with which your personal influence has invested the Oratory School. In conclusion, we pray that God may long preserve you to us, for the good of His Church and in the interest of Catholic education in England.”

In response, the Cardinal offers a perhaps heretofore-unknown historical tidbit: “Concerning our school, it may be pleasant to you to know that the Holy Father at Rome seemed to take great interest in it [the school] without my urging it upon him.” Newman notes that Blessed Pius IX’s particular concern, indeed his specific mission, was that the Oratory would be a special outreach “to the educated classes, and to what would be called the class of gentlemen.” We shall have reason to return to his emphasis on that “target audience” in due course.

Finally, we hear from the Masters and Boys of the Oratory School on the same day. Very touchingly, their representative declares:

Many of us have been formed by your teaching, and moulded, we hope, by your example: all of us know or have heard often from others, of the wonderful way in which God's grace has, for more than thirty years,

enabled you, by your writings, to defend and illustrate the Church of God: all of us are now, by a singular privilege, the children of your house, the daily witnesses of your more private life, and the recipients of your constant teaching and guidance; and therefore we claim a more intimate share in the joy which is so universal, when the Holy Father thus manifestly, and as it were, in the sight of the whole world, sets the Church's seal on the work of your life.

Quite tellingly, Blessed Newman bypasses the school masters and focuses his attention on the boys themselves, wherein his love and devotion for them shine forth with particular brilliance, sensitivity and insight:

Of course, I am not a person who can say how much you know of me, because boys' eyes are very sharp, and they look about and see many things which others think they are not aware of. Therefore, when you tell me that you are witnesses of my more private life, and recipients of my constant teaching and guidance, I know perfectly well that I have not any direct duties towards you in the way of teaching. That shows that you must use your eyes very well, and hence my great pleasure and gratification at knowing that your sight and knowledge of me is so much in my favour, and also my pleasure in regard to the accomplishment of those objects which, of course, I have most at



heart.

Demonstrating a profound knowledge of adolescent psychology, he observes:

Boys not only have eyes, but they have very retentive memories; and that is another pleasure which I have in reading this Address, because this day and time will be printed on your memory a long time hence. You will say: "I recollect that perfectly well; it was the day I saw Cardinal Newman there for the first time," and you will have something to tell to those after you. That, of course, is a great pleasure to me — to think that this day will be in your minds. And so again, when I look to those who have gone forward in the career of life, and see how many instances one has to look back upon, the way they have turned out, their excellence, and the way in which they fulfilled the duties of their station, and how, in respect of some of them who have been taken off by death by the will of God, what good lives they led, and how much there is to be thankful for in their career, which is now finished, — when I think of that, and think of you who are to go into the same world, and fight the same battles as they have, I have great confidence that you, beginning with such tender

feelings towards your teachers and me especially, will answer all the expectations that we have formed of you, and the wishes we have for you. I will say no more, but will thank you, and assure you that, as this day will remain in your mind, so it will remain in mine.

I am sure that the long and impressive list of alumni — from one of the sons of J.R.R. Tolkien (who became a priest) and one of Tolkien's grandsons as well as Hilaire Belloc — would be a source of great satisfaction to him.

Let us leave the Cardinal for some moments and turn our attention to the present occupant of the Chair of Peter.

Mario Bergoglio-Pope Francis on Catholic Schools

One personal asset that Pope Francis has that was lacking to Cardinal Newman resides in his being a "cradle Catholic," which, among other things, gave him access to a total Catholic education from childhood. We glean valuable insights into Papa Bergoglio's philosophy of education from addresses he has given on the topic but also, and I say, uniquely, from his reminiscences on his own experience of Catholic schools as a student and a teacher. In recounting the boyhood stories, he waxes rhapsodic. In a 1990 letter to a Salesian Father,⁹ he reflects on his Salesian education thus: "It's not

⁹Zenit, 4 February 2014.



strange that I speak with affection of the Salesians, because my family was nourished spiritually by the Salesians of San Carlos. . . . But the most intense experience with the Salesians was in the year 1949, when I frequented as a boarder the sixth grade in the Wilfrid Baron School of the Holy Angels, at Ramos Mejia.”

He goes on to give a detailed recollection and analysis of that school:

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.” Study, the social values of living

together, the social references to the neediest (I remember having learned there to deprive myself of some things to give to persons who were poorer than me), sport, competence, piety ... \pard sa99 everything was *real*, and everything formed habits that, all together, molded a cultural way of being. One lived in this world but open to the transcendence of the other world. It was very easy for me then in secondary school, to do the “transfer” (in the psycho-pedagogic sense) to other realities. And this simply because I lived *well* the realities lived in the School; without distortions, with realism, with a sense of responsibility and a horizon of transcendence. This *Catholic culture* is — in my opinion — the best that I received at Ramos Mejia.

He then launches into specifics:

Everything was done with *a meaning*. There was nothing “without meaning”. . . . I learned there, almost unwittingly, to seek the meaning of things. One of the key moments of this learning to seek the meaning of things was the “Good night” that the Father Director generally gave. . . . Another “Good night” that made an impression was one of Father Cantarutti on the need to pray to the most Holy Virgin to



understand well one's own vocation. I remember that that night I prayed intensely as I went to the dormitory. . . and since that evening I have never fallen asleep without praying. It was a psychological moment adapted to giving a meaning to the day, to things.

What else did he learn?

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. Always with the help of professors, I learned a method of study, mnemonic—technical rules, etc. *Sport* was an essential aspect of life. One played well and a lot. The values that sport teaches (in addition to health) we already knew. In study as in sport the dimension of *competition* had a certain importance: we were taught to *compete well and to compete as Christians*.

And then a very significant element of human formation:

A dimension that grew a lot in the subsequent years to the one spent in the School was my capacity to *feel good*: and I realized that the base was set the year of boarding school. . . . They *educated* my *sentiment* there. The

Salesians have a special ability for this. I am not referring to “sentimentalism” but to “sentiment” as a value of the heart. Not to be afraid and to say to oneself what one is feeling.

He also identifies something that we have all seen throughout his pontificate:

Education to piety was another key dimension. A virile piety, appropriate to the age. In piety devotion to the Most Holy Virgin merits a special mention. They impressed this on me with fire . . . and, in as much as I remember, also on my companions. And the recourse to Our Lady is essential for life. It goes from the awareness of having a Mother in Heaven that takes care of me to the recitation of the three Hail Marys, or of the Rosary. But the Virgin remained, and could not go out of our heart. . . . Sometimes I have heard criticisms of the “piety” that was inculcated in the School (I heard them years later), but they are always the usual rigmaroles of those who do not want to go to Mass because they were obliged to do so in School, etc. It is an anachronistic criticism because it transfers to the field of the pedagogy of piety a precise problem such as that of adolescent or youthful rebellion.



Last but not least, he zeroes in on a topic too-often ignored today but quite necessary in a fully Catholic education:

Closely united to love and to devotion to the Most Holy Virgin was love of *purity*. In this connection (and I believe altogether in Don Bosco's preventive system) there is a very great misunderstanding. I was taught to love purity without any sort of obsessive teaching. There was not sexual obsession in the School, at least in the year I was there. I found more sexual obsession later in other educators or psychologists that shows ostentatiously a "*laissez-passer*" in this regard (but which deep down they interpreted behaviors in a Freudian key, which saw sex everywhere).

He then summarizes it all thus:

All these things configured a *Catholic culture*. They prepared me well for secondary school and for life. . . . I do not wish to fall into the psychology of the former student, a nostalgic, Proust-like attitude, where the memory selects the rosy part of life and denies the more limited or lacking aspects. There were lacks in the School, but the educational structure was not wanting. It is what I just wrote in the

preceding paragraphs. There were things in 1949 that are not applicable in 1990 ... but I am convinced that the 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.

Beyond the heart-warming memories, we must never forget that Jorge Bergoglio is a Jesuit, which thereby ought to place him squarely in the forefront of Catholic education. How many men here heard a Jesuit proudly boast to his parents when he was still an adolescent: "Give me that boy for six years, and I'll give you a man!" Like every other Jesuit, the seminarian Bergoglio engaged in a teaching internship. Following ordination, he served as a high school teacher of chemistry and Latin; as novice master and provincial, he kept Catholic schools front-and-center in the life of the Jesuits committed to his care. As Pope, he has unfailingly encouraged episcopal conferences to support Catholic schools. To the bishops of Benin, most recently he commented:

Another important challenge that you are carefully addressing regards young people and education. In your dioceses you have opened many Catholic schools. . . . This effort must be followed without pause, for the integral formation, both human and spiritual, of the young generations is important for the future of the society to which they can



then make their precious contribution, especially in terms of solidarity, justice and respect for others.”¹⁰

To the Congregation for Catholic Education, he said: “. . . education is a great open building site in which the Church has always been present through her institutions and projects. Today we must encourage this commitment on all levels and renew the commitment of all engaged in the new evangelization.”¹¹ Here I would underscore his connection between Catholic schooling and the new evangelization — a connection I made at the outset of this paper. Furthermore, in *Evangelii Gaudium*, he made a point of highlighting the significance of Catholic schools not only for the internal benefit of the Church but also for the common good:

Despite the tide of secularism which has swept our societies, in many countries — even those where Christians are a minority — the Catholic Church is considered a credible institution by public opinion, and trusted for her solidarity and concern for those in greatest need. Again and again, the Church has acted as a mediator in finding solutions to problems affecting peace, social harmony, the land, the defence of life, human and civil rights, and so forth. And

how much good has been done by Catholic schools and universities around the world! This is a good thing. Yet, we find it difficult to make people see that when we raise other questions less palatable to public opinion, we are doing so out of fidelity to precisely the same convictions about human dignity and the common good. (n. 65)

With no small degree of irony, he feels compelled in that passage to note the inconsistency of those who praise the academic excellence of our schools, all the while expressing dismay about the underlying philosophy of the human person of those institutions — obviously failing to see the intimate relation between the two.

In the Pope’s discourse to the Italian Catholic Union of School Teachers, he began with the greeting, “Dear Colleagues.” Explaining that mode of address, he noted with obvious pleasure: “Allow me to address you as such, given that I too have been a teacher like you and I have fond memories of my days spent in the classroom with students.” He used the rest of his presentation to provide an understanding of the vocation of a Catholic school teacher. His first sentence sets the stage well: “Teaching is a *beautiful profession*,” following up with a touch of realism, which surely gained him a receptive audience for the rest of his talk: “It’s a pity teachers are poorly paid... because it is not just about the time they spend in school, then the time they spend preparing, the time they spend on each individual student: how to help them move forward.” Clearly, he is speaking from personal experience.

¹⁰27 April 2015.

¹¹13 February 2014.



He then hones in on the very essence of this vocation:

Teaching is a serious commitment that only a mature and well-balanced person can undertake. Such a commitment can be intimidating, but remember that no teacher is ever alone: they always share their work with other colleagues and the entire educational community to which they belong. . . . School is certainly comprised of valid and qualified instruction, but also of human relations, which for us are welcoming and benevolent relations, to be offered indiscriminately to all. Indeed, the duty of a good teacher — all the more for a Christian teacher — is to love his or her more difficult, weaker, more disadvantaged students with greater intensity.

And, in a damning critique of much of what passes for education in the contemporary scene, the Pope says:

If a professional association of Christian teachers wants to bear witness to their inspiration today, then it is called to persevere *in the peripheries of schools*, which cannot be abandoned to marginalization, exclusion, ignorance, crime. In a society that struggles to find points of reference, young people need a positive reference point in their school. The

school can be this or become this only if it has teachers capable of giving meaning to school, to studies and to culture, without reducing everything to the mere transmission of technical knowledge. Instead they must aim to build an educational relationship with each student, who must feel accepted and loved for who he or she is, with all of his or her limitations and potential. In this direction, your task is more necessary now than ever. You must not only teach content, but the values and customs of life. . . . A computer can teach content, but to understand how to love, to understand values and customs which create harmony in society, it takes a good teacher.

Finally, he encourages those teachers to follow the example and to seek the intercession of so many saintly educators in our history.

The Christian community has many examples of *great educators* who are dedicated to addressing the shortcomings of the educational system or to establishing schools in their own right. Let us think of, among others, St John Bosco, the bicentenary of whose birth is this year. He advised his priests: teach with love. The first attitude of an educator is love. You too,



Christian teachers, can look to these figures to animate from within a school . . . [which] needs credible educators and witnesses of a mature and complete humanity. Testimony. This is not bought, it is not sold: it is given. . . .

I encourage you to renew your passion for humanity — you cannot teach without passion! — in the process of formation, and to be *witnesses of life and hope*. Never, never close a door, open all of them wide, in order for the students to have hope.

We should not pass over too quickly his belief that Catholic educational institutions ought to be “addressing the shortcomings of the educational system”; in other words, our schools must be different!

The penultimate sample of the Pope’s Catholic educational philosophy I would share with you comes from an encounter of his with students of Jesuit schools very early in his pontificate.¹² First, he offers the teachers some encouragement:

Do not be disheartened in the face of the difficulties that the educational challenge presents! Educating is not a profession but an attitude, a way of being; in order to educate it is necessary to step out of ourselves and be among young people, to

accompany them in the stages of their growth and to set ourselves beside them.

He continues:

Give them hope and optimism for their journey in the world. Teach them to see the beauty and goodness of creation and of man who always retains the Creator’s hallmark. But above all with your life be witnesses of what you communicate. Educators — Jesuits, teachers, operators, parents — pass on knowledge and values with their words; but their words will have an incisive effect on children and young people if they are accompanied by their witness, their consistent way of life. Without consistency it is impossible to educate! You are all educators, there are no delegates in this field.

He then notes how the educational apostolate needs to be a truly collaborative effort, uniting the professional educators with the family — for the welfare of the students and of society as a whole:

Thus collaboration in a spirit of unity and community among the various educators is essential and must be fostered and encouraged. School can and must be a catalyst, it must be a place of encounter and convergence of the entire educating community, with the sole objective of training and

¹² June 2013.



helping to develop mature people who are simple, competent and honest, who know how to love with fidelity, who can live life as a response to God's call, and their future profession as a service to society.

In his address to the Congregation of Catholic Education, which I cited earlier, he speaks about the need for what he terms "quality preparation of formators": "We cannot improvise. We must take this seriously," he states with no small degree of urgency. He also issues a clarion call for the personal witness of the Catholic educator: "Consistency is an indispensable factor in the education of young people! Consistency! We cannot grow and we cannot educate without consistency: consistency and witness!"

And how is this to occur?

For this, an educator is himself in need of permanent formation. It is necessary to invest so that teachers and supervisors may maintain a high level of professionalism and also maintain their faith and the strength of their spiritual impetus. And in this permanent formation too I would suggest a need for retreats and spiritual exercises for educators. It is a beautiful thing to offer courses on the subject, but it is also necessary to offer spiritual exercises and retreats focused on prayer! For consistency requires effort but most of all it is a

gift and a grace. We must ask for it!

Finally, it gives me great personal pleasure to put in high relief an oft-repeated plaint of this Pope, namely, the abandonment of the school apostolate by so many clergy and religious — a highly neuralgic issue in our country, where it can be asserted with total confidence that the departure of thousands of priests and religious from our schools has been disastrous from every point of view.

In that 1990 letter to his Salesian friend, the future Pope ended by sharing an anecdote that "saddened" him greatly.

A Salesian Father that I esteem a lot, told me in a conversation that they were thinking of *leaving* some Schools in the hands of the laity. I asked him if it was because of a lack of vocations. In part, he told me, this was the reason, but because young Salesians do not want to work in the Schools, they do not feel attracted to this apostolate.

Father Bergoglio proceeded to tell that Salesian that the Argentine province of Jesuits had come to the exact opposite conclusion and had, in fact, opened new schools, even relying on the parochial model. The Salesian then suggested another reason for his Congregation's distancing itself from schools. The future Pope commented:

That Father also told me that another area was that of *making a gesture of insertion*" (sic!) in the neighborhoods, and this is



why they left the Schools or some of them. He said that it was a pastoral *option*. In face of this I could not help but think of the Salesians that I knew in the School, I do not know if they “made gestures of insertion,” but they did spend themselves the whole day and did not even have time to have a little rest, this I do know. If those men that I knew in the School — and I conclude with this reflection — could create a “Catholic culture,” it was because *they had faith*. They believed in Jesus Christ and — a bit by faith and a bit by nerve — they had the courage to “preach”: with the word, with their life, with their work. They were not ashamed to be humiliated with the language of the cross of Jesus which is shame and folly for others. I ask myself: when 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? I do not want to be simplistic, but I do not cease to be concerned about the fact that — to make radical gestures of social insertion — adherence to the living Jesus Christ is abandoned [in favor of] the consequent insertion in whatever environmental context including the educational, to build a Catholic culture.

Strong language, to be sure, and most noteworthy that this “Pope of the Peripheries” does not buy the argument that the school apostolate is a distraction from the periphery; on the contrary, I think he would hold that it is the primary periphery.

And lest he be accused of failing to give this hard message to his own, he ended that meeting with Jesuit students with a salutary reminder to his fellow Jesuits: “Now I would like to tell the Jesuits that it is important to nourish your commitment in the educational sector. Schools are a precious means for making a contribution to the progress of the Church and of society as a whole.”

A Concluding Assessment

As we come to the end of our survey of the educational philosophies of Cardinal Newman and Pope Francis, I would like to make them interlocutors.

1. I mentioned the Jesuit maxim about turning boys into men through their teaching apostolate. Interestingly, a new book on Newman’s university has just emerged, with the intriguing title, *The Making of Men*.¹³ That phrase, we learn, “was used by Newman the night before the Catholic university started, when addressing its first seventeen students. He told them that they had not come to the university to become engineers, doctors, businessmen, soldiers or bankers — they could do that elsewhere — but to be ‘made men.’”¹⁴

¹³Written by Paul Shrimpton and published by Gracewing in England.

¹⁴Jack Carrigan, “How Newman Passed His University Challenge,” *Catholic Herald*, 29 May 2015, 30.



2. Both Newman and Francis see the Catholic school as having an essential place in the life of the Church and of the general society. Further, while Pio Nono urged Newman to educate the elite, we have seen that Father Bergoglio/Pope Francis would hold that every Catholic school is a periphery designed to serve as leaven in the mainstream.

3. Both regard the teacher as key to the whole enterprise, with particular emphasis on personal influence.

4. Both share a deep appreciation for the role of the priest in the school.

5. Both rejoice in the results achieved from a Catholic education — Newman from the teacher/administrator's side of the desk and Bergoglio as both alumnus and educator.

If Blessed John Henry were asked the ultimate purpose of a Catholic school, I suspect he might say that it is to realize that — in Newman's famous and poignant words, "God has created me for some definite purpose." And I equally suspect that Pope Francis, in response, would utter a resounding "Amen."



Catholic Schools Need ‘Strong Priestly Presence’

HUNTINGTON, N.Y. (CNS) — A Catholic school needs “a strong priestly presence” or it “is going to move in a problematic direction,” said Father Peter M.J. Stravinkas, executive director of the Catholic Education Foundation.

“The school effort rises and falls with the priest. If he’s engaged, it thrives,” he explained. “If he’s indifferent, the best efforts get undermined.”

Catholic schools are critical to the mission of the church because they teach the faith, and identify and develop priestly vocations, Father Stravinkas said.

The priest led a two-day seminar at the Immaculate Conception Seminary in Huntington Aug. 18 and 19 for priests from 13 dioceses. The program combined history and church teaching about Catholic education with practical advice on how priests can be valuable witnesses to the faith by their presence in the schools.

Priests should build time into their schedules to be with students on the playground, in the cafeteria, at sporting events and in the classroom. “You don’t have to be a theologian to teach high school religion. If you can teach hormone-raging juniors and seniors, you can do anything,” Father Stravinkas said. “But you have to be authentic, or they can smell it a mile away.”

He added, “My greatest joy is being able to drop into a first- or second-grade class.”

The priest is an important resource for the faculty and administration for pastoral input, theological advice, counseling, outreach to

parents and grandparents, and welcoming new families. “We never enrolled children in our school, we enrolled families, to make the point that parents are the first educators of their children,” he said.

The bishop sets the tone for Catholic education in a diocese and can influence vocations by his placement of priests, Father Stravinkas said. Most seminarians are graduates of Catholic high schools, he said. Priestly vocations are robust in dioceses such as Lincoln, Nebraska, and Wichita, Kansas, where newly ordained priests serve their first assignment as high school teachers.

“It was short-sighted on the part of many bishops to remove priests from schools. The vocation crisis was exacerbated by their removal,” Father Stravinkas said. Nonetheless, “if this generation of priests is actively inserted into the school apostolate, we’ll have plenty of vocations and they’ll multiply themselves,” he said.

Similarly, seminary rectors should encourage priests to participate in schools and bishops should choose pastors carefully. “How can a bishop assign a priest to a parish with a school if a fellow has no orientation to it at all?” he asked.

Parishioners must see the school as an integral part of the parish, not a separate entity, Father Stravinkas said. “We ought not to be talking about Catholic schools only during Catholic Schools Week,” he said.

It was a “fundamental mistake in the 1970s” to separate the finances of parishes and schools, Father Stravinkas said. “While it



may have been more efficient, at the psychological level it caused problems by creating the impression that the school was a separate entity unto itself.”

Seminar participant Father Christopher Phillips, pastor of Our Lady of the Atonement in San Antonio, said he situated his office adjacent to the school lobby and keeps the door open to encourage student drop-ins. He also said the church and the school are connected by internal hallways.

“Give everyone an opportunity to use the school,” for meetings and functions, and keep the parish informed of school activities through the bulletin, Father Stravinskaskas recommended.

He cited the commitment of Pope Francis to Catholic education. “When the pope talks about his experience, he gets almost rhapsodic,” Father Stravinskaskas said. The pope’s habits of a lifetime were instilled as a sixth-grader with the Salesians, he said.

“Pope Francis obviously doesn’t buy the argument that Catholic schools are a distraction from the periphery,” Father Stravinskaskas said. Educators must be mature, well-balanced, passionate, prayerful purveyors of values and customs, as well as content, and consider their craft a vocation, rather than a profession. According to Pope Francis, consistency and witness are indispensable factors in the education of young people, he said.

Vera Hough, a married mother of four children from Little Silver, New Jersey, urged seminar participants to be ‘unexpected priests’ in the daily lives of schoolchildren. Such a priest inspires by being present and sincere. “You may never know the fruits of your labors as an unexpected priest. You

will inspire others by your integrity,” she said. “Be faithful to the magisterium. Be yourself. Be ecumenical, but always faithful. You will nourish hearts, lighten heavy loads and foster healthy, Christian families.”

The Catholic Education Foundation, based in Rochester, was established in 2001 to provide financial assistance for needy students in Catholic high schools. “Over time, it has morphed into an organization that helps Catholic schools deepen their Catholic identity through workshops, a periodical and a Catholic identity assessment instrument,” Father Stravinskaskas said.

“We’ve been getting requests from bishops to do something to help priests understand the incredible importance of Catholic schools in the overall mission of the church, and how critical is the role of the priest in maintaining that centrality of the schools,” he said.

“Catholic education K-12 should be tuition-free,” he said. “Every Catholic is responsible for the maintenance of Catholic schools. We need to recapture that concept we lost in the 1960s and 1970s. We have the most affluent Catholic population in the history of the church. Yet somehow immigrants who built schools with their pennies have grandchildren making six figures who can’t maintain them. It’s not a lack of money, it’s a lack of faith,” he concluded.

Father Joseph W. McQuaide IV of the Diocese of Wilmington, Delaware, recently completed his first priestly assignment. He said the seminar confirmed and clarified his experience that the priest is the “man on the ground, able to interact with students and, through them, their families to engage in ongoing evangelization.”



“The Catholic faithful are extremely sympathetic to their priests and a little goes a long way. If you do something for their children, you do something great for them. We need to find time, be there and show support,” he said.

Beth Griffin
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