

# THE CATHOLIC EDUCATOR

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## A Word From Our Editor

*Homily preached by the Reverend Peter M. J. Stravinskis, Ph.D., S.T.D., on 26 September 2017, Tuesday of the Twenty-fifth Week per annum, at the Church of the Holy Innocents, Manhattan, on the occasion of the Awards Celebration for the Catholic Education Foundation.*

Laudetur Iesus Christus! Praised be Jesus Christ!

In my capacity as the executive director of the Catholic Education Foundation, it is my pleasure and honor to welcome all of you to this celebration of Holy Mass as we begin our evening acknowledging individuals and institutions which have had a significant impact on the growth and development of our Catholic schools. I would be remiss were I not also to acknowledge with gratitude the gracious hospitality of Father James Miara, pastor of Holy Innocents, who delights in identifying himself as a proud product of the Felician Sisters of Lodi, New Jersey.

When I first laid eyes on the Scripture readings assigned for today, I was a bit crestfallen since nothing seemed to lend itself to reflection on this evening's event. However, a little time and deeper reflection brought some enlightenment, which I hope I can share with you. So, first, some context for this relatively short but highly important passage from the Old Testament.

The center of Jewish worship and the source of great pride was Solomon's Temple. In the sixth century before Christ, the Babylonians invaded and destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, after which the Jews were driven into exile from the Holy City. All this was interpreted by the prophets not as a sign of the superior military power of the Babylonians but as a punishment inflicted by Almighty God on the Jews for their infidelity, as God merely used the Babylonians to accomplish His will. This exile lasted nearly seventy years until the Babylonians, in turn, were conquered by the Persians. It is King Cyrus who allows the Jews to return to their homeland, but what is the homeland without the Temple? Cyrus understands that and permits work to begin on the restoration of the Temple. That work, however, stalls. Which is where our First Reading today picks up the story.

Darius, the Persian king, then issues a decree which not only permits the re-construction of God's House but even allots funding from the royal treasury. Apparently, the Persian kings saw something unique in the Jewish exiles and attributed it to their God. The rebuilding project required great sacrifice on the part of the whole Jewish people but, Ezra tells us, they went about the task with joy because they considered it worth the effort and, indeed, most necessary. The sacred author notes that the Jews were able to accomplish this task because they were sustained by the encouragement of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, presumably spurring them on to fidelity not only in building but in living according to the law of the Lord.

What does this interesting piece of biblical history have to do with us? Let's take our time machine up eighteen centuries from the return of the exiles to a small town in Italy called Assisi. A young troubadour and son of a wealthy textile merchant heard the call of Christ to turn from

his dissolute and profligate ways, so as to live according to the Gospel. Upon responding to that divine call, the converted sinner heard yet another call as he prayed outside a church in ruins: “Francis, rebuild my Church, which is in ruins!” Still very much fixed on the physical and material, he took up the mission of rebuilding that little church. Gradually, it dawned on Francis that the real work which the Lord was requiring of him was something far more vast and far more important: the rebuilding of that Church, which is the Body of Christ.

And so I ask, have you begun to see what God’s holy Word is suggesting to us promoters of Catholic education? How many of us have been living the experience of exile as the Church has been buffeted for decades now by the assaults of secularization from without and by confused and confusing signals from within? I would argue that when our commitment to Catholic education was strong, we were strong. Conversely, when that commitment wavered, we became weak. The first archbishop of New York, John J. Hughes, understood this very well when he declared, without fear of contradiction, “The days have come. . . in which the school is more necessary than the church.” The bishops of our nation understood this very well when, in plenary council in 1884, they mandated the establishment of a Catholic school in every parish, with the goal of having every Catholic child in a Catholic school. We never achieved that goal completely, but we did come close – until we lost our nerve and sense of direction.

I believe the time has come for the Church in the United States – and this may be our last chance as an identifiable community – to muster our courage and vision to rebuild our Catholic school system. This effort will require the engagement of every generation, and it will demand no small amount of sacrifice, but great prophetic Popes like John Paul II and Benedict XVI have already issued that clarion call to sacrifice for our schools. In an earlier marriage ritual, the priest forewarned the bride and groom that their new life together would demand sacrifice and then, in stirring words, he went on: “Sacrifice is usually difficult and irksome; love can make it easy; perfect love can make it a joy.” Yes, a perfect love for our schools, which is nothing other than love for our children and our Church, can make our labor true joy.

This evening we are honoring those who have given their all to rebuild the edifice of Catholic education – a priest, a community of Sisters, a layman, and two schools where faculty and administration have done an exemplary job of leading young believers in the path of the Gospel, lest we spend another half-century in exile from a fully Catholic life. As we honor them, know that they represent thousands of other educational leaders within the Catholic community, as well as hundreds of thousands of committed parents.

A temple is a house of God and a place of sacrifice. In point of fact, every Catholic school is a dwelling place for God in the midst of His people, and it is where sacrifice is taught and practiced. How does that happen? We find the formula beautifully given in today’s short but powerful passage from the Gospel of St. Luke: the youngsters our teachers encounter day in and day out are taught Our Lord’s criteria for belonging to His family, namely, by hearing His word and acting on it. Some commentators have concluded that, with these words, Christ is distancing Himself from His holy Mother. On the contrary, twice before today’s episode, Luke has

informed us that Our Lady is not only the biological Mother of the Lord but is one who “ponders” God’s Word and, as we know from the witness of her life, and also acts on that Word.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, then, is the pre-eminent hearer and doer of the Word. With good reason, then, does the Church invoke her as “Sedes Sapientiae” (Seat of Wisdom). Wisdom Incarnate sits on her lap, and she presents Him to the world. Isn’t that the very mission of Catholic education? And since Jesus is also the Prince of Peace, so needed in our warring world, like the Jews of old, we should not fear enlisting the support even of pagans who admire an education which teaches our youth to walk in the ways of justice and peace. We certainly hope that all of you present at this Holy Mass can be counted on to support our efforts.

And so, dear honorees, in the name of the Church, I want to thank you for heeding the call to rebuild the temple of Catholic education; may your tribe increase. Rabbinic tradition holds that the Second Temple was even more magnificent than the First; may it be so for our endeavor, too. As we pursue our noble purpose, we enlist the intercession of that first and best hearer and doer of the Word:

*Sedes Sapientiae, ora pro nobis.* Seat of Wisdom, pray for us.

Fr. Peter Stravinskas  
Editor

*Editor's Note: Our cover art catches Sr. Margaret Ann, OCD, affectionately dubbed "The Chainsaw Nun" due to her hands-on approach to dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Irma. Sister is the principal of Archbishop Coleman Carroll High School in the Archdiocese of Miami and a member of the Carmelite Sisters of Alhambra, California, a wonderful and faithful community of women religious who, not surprisingly, are doing very well with vocations.*

## A Simple Rx for Catholic Schools

Much has been written about the crisis in parochial school education, what with declining enrollment, school closures and burgeoning deficits. An equal amount of ink has been dedicated to possible fixes (vouchers, partnerships, charter schools, etc.), none of which has inched toward fruition in large part because the proposed fix is too dramatic (apocalyptic?) a development than the electorate at large is willing to undertake. However a simple, non-burdensome, inexpensive cure does exist.

If you start with the principle that the key is attracting/retaining quality teachers, then let's focus on the income disparity of teacher salaries. Using Worcester, Massachusetts, as our beta case, the salary differential is pronounced (average public school salary is \$56,000 versus \$46,000 to that paid a Catholic school teacher.) That 22%, or \$10,000, of forfeited revenue is a bitter if not impossible pill for the average person to swallow. Of course, when federal income taxes are factored in, the differential, while still significant, lessens to about \$7,500 (i.e., a single person earning \$56,000 pays \$9,778 in tax, thus netting after-tax income of \$46,222; the \$46,000 wage earner pays \$7,278, netting \$38,722.) Not to bore you with tax minutiae, but stay with this, because taxes are the key to restoring some parity.

Opting to work at a Catholic school in effect means our teacher is contributing \$10,000 of services that could otherwise be earned if the teacher opted for the public school

system. An oddity of the Internal Revenue Code is that while one is entitled to deduct cash contributions or in-kind property donations, services rendered to a charity are not deductible. If the law (IRC section 170) were amended to allow teachers of charitable organizations to claim the differential value of their contributed service, the salary differential would narrow considerably as follows:

|                          | <b>Public School</b> | <b>Parochial School</b> |
|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Salary</i>            | \$56,000             | \$46,000                |
| <i>Service Deduction</i> |                      | (10,000)                |
| <i>Tax</i>               | (9,778)              | (4,940)                 |
| <i>After Tax Income</i>  | \$46,222             | \$42,060                |

Thus the reduced taxes the parochial school teacher pays after the newly allowed deduction reduces the salary disparity to a much more palatable \$4,000. This modest tweak of one section of the tax law is much less costly or invasive than the above-mentioned palliatives such as a voucher system. Moreover, it provides income equality to a segment of the working class, and fairly throws a lifeline to the entire school system. The time has come for a concerted Catholic lobbying effort aimed at a small incremental fix like the charitable service deduction, without abandoning the fight for complete parental freedom of choice in education.

Kenneth T. Zemsky

## **New York TV Anchor Lauds Catholic Schools: I am Proud to be a Catholic**

Catholic schools provide an invaluable service to our communities!

That was the message Rosanna Scotto, co-host of the morning TV program “Good Day New York,” gave on a video recorded for New Evangelization Television (NET), an initiative of the Diocese of Brooklyn.

“I’m a product of Catholic schools,” she said. “I credit my Catholic education at Visitation Academy in Brooklyn and Catholic University of America of giving me a terrific, stable foundation to survive in this crazy world of TV news. I believe so strongly in the Catholic education that I

enrolled my children in Catholic schools as well.”

She specifically pointed to the moral development that Catholic schools provide as one of their main benefits: “I think it’s not only important to get a fantastic education but also important to give back. Catholic schools promote service as part of their curriculum. Values and morals are part of the education.”

She concluded: “I’m proud to be a Catholic and humbled to part of your community.”

Church POP Editor

<https://churchpop.com/2017/08/31/i-am-proud-to-be-a-catholic-new-york-tv-anchor-publicly-supports-catholic-schools/>

## Stewards of Education: How Schools Partner With Parents

Discussion about Catholic education often focuses on how to effectively hand on the Catholic faith to students, but what about parental involvement in passing on the treasures of the faith?

Some Catholic schools are being more intentional about transmitting the faith to parents, knowing the impact that parent faith formation can have on increasing fervor for the Catholic faith in families and schools.

### *Encouraging Parents*

Amanda Livermore is the director of mission effectiveness at Bishop Moore Catholic High School in Orlando, Florida. As a parent herself and an evangelist to the students, faculty and staff, parents, alumni and greater Bishop Moore community, Livermore has seen firsthand how the Catholic identity of a school is impacted by parents taking more seriously their roles as the primary educators of faith.

“Research confirms what the Church has consistently communicated: that parents are the primary educators of their children,” Livermore told the Register.

“At Bishop Moore Catholic, we see ourselves as partners, supporting parents in this mission of ‘domestic church,’ as we work together to get their children to heaven. The Lord has entrusted to us not only the 1,350 students enrolled in our school, but all those with whom we come in contact through this ministry.”

Livermore, with the support of administration and in conjunction with her team of campus ministers, helps make

available occasions for contact with entire families, rather than just the students.

“Through these relationships, we are able to meet these parents where they are and provide a variety of opportunities in which they may grow in their own faith,” explained Livermore.

Livermore and her team have several practical ways in which they engage parents in the community. They share student retreat details with parents, asking them to take 10 minutes from their day to pray for their child on retreat and to reflect on retreat-themed questions that serve as a “mini retreat” of their own. They also take advantage of Advent and Lent as a great time to inform parents of ways they can live out liturgical activities, customs and traditions in the home. “Family of Faith” events, in which parents are invited to attend breakfast together, while listening to a speaker address a faith-based topic of interest, have also been helpful in spiritually feeding the adult community at the school.

“Often, parents stay after the event has ended, talking with each other about what they have heard,” Livermore recounted.

“The holy fellowship is an important part of building up the kingdom within our community.”

Overall, Livermore thinks that reaching out to parents and encouraging their growth in faith has a big impact on the school, and their efforts prove to be well-received by parents, too. “Parents are eager to participate and are grateful for the efforts made on their behalf. If we can empower and inspire

parents to have holy conversations in the home, students come to school seeing the thread of faith they are learning in the classroom coming alive at the dinner table. It teaches a comprehensive approach to our faith, making it more of a lifestyle.”

### ***Students Inspire Parents***

“As a teacher, I have witnessed several examples of children who never make that personal connection with the faith unless it is reinforced at home,” reported Rachele Schoellhammer, a sixth- and seventh-grade teacher of theology and math at Canyon Heights Academy in Campbell, California. “Teaching should be thought of as a ministry for families. I think educators can encourage parents to prioritize the faith at home by living it themselves and being an example for parents and children to see.”

In her years of teaching, Schoellhammer has noticed that being fervent about passing on the faith to her students can have an indirect impact on the parents, describing her students as “inspirational evangelists” to their own mothers and fathers. “Parents will often share with me some aspect of the faith that they learned from their child at school, like the obligation of going to Mass on Sunday, proper tithing, what fasting is or [details about] Marian apparitions. Even parents who don’t know the faith well tend to learn and be inspired,” Schoellhammer has recognized.

Schoellhammer has found that prayer has a powerful effect on student-parent-teacher relationships in a Catholic environment. “I make a weekly visit to the chapel with my students and teach them to pray. As a result, some parents may ask themselves, ‘Am I

living out the faith according to my understanding?’”

### ***Faith-Focused***

Partnering with parents in the religious education of students is a top priority of Father Thomas Dufner, pastor at the Church of the Epiphany in Coon Rapids, Minnesota. The new program he has developed for Epiphany Catholic School, called “Partnership in Faith,” aims to “form highly educated saints and citizens” with a significant emphasis on renewing the partnership between the Church and parents. “Since parents are the primary educators of their children, their participation at Sunday Mass, daily prayer and cultivating virtue is necessary for the fruit of Catholic education to take hold,” explained Father Dufner. The program is meant to address three primary issues: parental (and consequently student) faith practice, school funding in light of parish demographics, and curricula, which should be aimed at educating students to become virtuous citizens.

“We are both extremely excited about the ‘Partnership in Faith’ program,” said Robert and Melissa Scalia, parents of three children, two of whom attend Epiphany Catholic School. “As parents we look to our children’s school as a place that will foster a lifelong love of learning and will assist us as parents in teaching truth. With Father Dufner and this program, along with the teachers, we have found a partner to help us raise children that are [being prepared] for eternity.”

The Scalias, who are eager to see the benefits of the classical curriculum that will be implemented in the school as part of the

program, are active participants not only at their children's school, but also at the parish — one of the primary goals of "Partnership in Faith."

Jane Fabozzi, another school parent who recently completed three and a half years on the school's advisory committee, sees the program as "a creative way to engage school families to become more involved as a whole in the parish community." Fabozzi added, "My hope for the 'Partnership in Faith' program is that it will be an open door that calls our school families and congregation to recommit as a parish to educate and actively live our Catholic faith."

With pastors around the country deploring the fact that less than 30% of Catholic-school families attend Mass on Sunday, "Partnership in Faith" offers benefits to school parents who participate in the program, including a decreased "parish partnership" tuition rate, access to expanded financial aid, and early registration access to limited class sizes.

"When the faith is a part of home life, students have a deeper awareness of and appreciation for the Mass, confession, adoration and all the incorporations of the liturgical calendar into the school day," Danielson mentioned.

"Faith provides the worldview we need to become the people we were created to be. Without the example of parents, children have a hard time seeing that connection between faith and daily living."

Katie Warner

Schools can be a real force for good in this mutual inspiration in faith between parents and students, but, as Katie Danielson, principal of Ave Maria Academy in Maple Grove, Minnesota, said, "Invitation is imperative."

Danielson advises other administrators, "Find ways to include parents in faith formation and prioritize it with the school calendar. During those back-to-school events, and especially with new families, make a point to emphasize the faith as the backbone of everything the school is about." At Ave Maria, Danielson and her faculty and staff utilize or promote programs like "Virtues in Practice" by the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia in Nashville and "Familia" by the Cana Family Institute to strengthen the spiritual lives of the whole families in their community.

Finally, in response to what every Catholic school can do to better minister to families, Danielson advised, "We should pray regularly for families. This unity in prayer can provide the spiritual backbone a community needs in today's culture."

## **How a Catholic Doctor from Italy Started a School That's Become a Sensation in the US**

A few weeks ago, the Catholic News Agency reported on a new Montessori school opening in Denver, Colorado, which would be influenced by the Byzantine Catholic tradition.

Pauline Meert, who co-founded Sophia Montessori Academy along with Irene O'Brien, said the two "wanted to combine Montessori and Catholicism because it just made so much sense."

Meert said the school aims to help children fulfill their God-given potential, and that "the Montessori message really makes that possible for each child, not just for a classroom as a whole, but for each individual."

Having had one child in Montessori and two in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program, I understand how seamlessly the Montessori method fuses with Catholicism. But what most people don't know is that it was designed that way, by the devoutly Catholic Maria Montessori.

Montessori was the first female medical doctor in Italy, and her early work focused on psychiatry with a particular interest in education. Because of this interest, she was appointed co-director of a new training institute for special education teachers where she began experimenting with new ways of teaching special needs children. Montessori believed in careful observation and adjusted her teaching methods according to the ways the children were learning.

Her child-centered approach to learning was so successful that it caught the attention of

Roman officials, who offered Montessori the chance to open a new childcare center in poor, inner-city Rome. This became the first Casa dei Bambini, the "children's house," where she began to develop a new way of teaching children based on observing and understanding the child.

Maria Montessori wrote extensively on the innate religiosity of children, culminating in

her book on developing the spiritual life of the child, *The Child in the Church*. She strongly believed that education should help cultivate the whole child — mind, body, and soul.

Two of her greatest disciples, Sofia Cavalletti and Gianna Gobbi, even developed a specific catechesis program based on Montessori's work and writings called *The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd*. This program, and Montessori education as a whole, is predicated upon the fundamental understanding that children are not empty vessels to be filled, but creatures of God who need guidance and care. Maria Montessori expressed it thus, "We must not just see the child, but God in him. We must respect the laws of creation in him."

In fact, the Catholic nature of Montessori education is so robust and so apparent that several popes have wanted all Catholic schools to become Montessori schools. Benedict XV even asked Maria Montessori to create a universal syllabus for Catholic schools, but died before he could implement it. A few years ago, *The Catholic Thing* did an extensive profile of Siena Academy, the only parochial Montessori school in the

Kalah Alexander

<https://aleteia.org/2017/08/22/how-a-catholic-doctor-from-italy-started-a-school-that-would-become-a-sensation-in-the-us/>

country, highlighting the fact that Montessori education is inherently Catholic.

"The way of teaching in a Montessori school is Catholic – centered on the person," she said. "The conventional method is centered on the curriculum, not the person."

Kathy O'Brien, a part-time teacher at Siena Academy, gave an example.

"Montessori education encourages inner control by the child, rather than external controls over the child. For example, one curriculum used in conventional education says to set a timer for children working a math lesson. That is an external control that doesn't help inner development of the child's will. One child may do four problems in an hour, which may be fabulous for that child. Another child may be able to do four problems in 10 minutes."

Unfortunately, not all devotees and practitioners of Montessori acknowledge its inherent Catholicism. And although Montessori education is incomplete without the inclusion of catechesis, it's still a beautifully Catholic way of teaching a child to learn — and learning from them in return.

## **Bishop Tells Catholic Educators: Lead Our Children to Christ**

*These were Bishop Barber's remarks to a meeting of presidents and principals of Diocese of Oakland Catholic schools on August 7.*

Archbishop John Quinn of San Francisco sadly passed away last month. When I was named a bishop, I asked him for his advice, since he had been named a bishop at a young age, 38, and it was he who ordained me a priest. He said the best advice he ever received was from a nun who had founded a number of Catholic schools and hospitals, and was renowned for her administrative ability. Sister told the young bishop: "If you want to be a good leader you need to do three things: Organize. Deputize. And Recognize."

I would like to recognize our new superintendent of Catholic schools, Dr. Kathleen Radecke, and the leader of our new Catholic Schools Network, Dr. Liz Guneratne. Both of these charismatic and highly educated women are a superb addition to our diocesan leadership team.

As we begin the new school year, I'd also like to recognize the principals and presidents of our Catholic elementary and secondary schools. You, and the teachers you hire, carry on the mission of The Good Shepherd, in taking care of Christ's children. Not only that, Catholic educators have a unique role in one of the primary missions of the Church: To form missionary disciples. You will be a success if your students leave your school — and your classroom — being a friend and a disciple of Jesus Christ.

How do we do that?

There are many ways, but I'd like to emphasize two: 1. Teach the Catholic Faith with seriousness and intellectual rigor. 2. Provide opportunities for students to experience the love and friendship of Jesus.

I once read an Op-Ed piece in *The Tablet*, one of Britain's leading Catholic journals, written by a young woman who had just completed 12 years of Catholic school education and was now a freshman at Oxford University. She was really upset that, although she had received an outstanding education in the secular subjects of science, math, history, languages, etc., her religious education was trite and absolutely boring.

She was angry because she could not answer the basic questions about Catholicism put to her by her well-educated classmates. As she wrote, "The extent of my religious education was 'Love God, draw a rainbow.'"

We need to give our students credit for their intelligence in the religion class as well as science and the liberal arts. Our theology courses need content. Students need to be presented with the in-depth teachings of Jesus and the Church, and the reasons why we believe.

Students should be able to articulate the answers to three questions when they leave your school: "Why do I believe in God?" "Why do I believe in Jesus Christ?" "Why do I believe in the Catholic Church?"

If you as educators (and parents) have difficulty answering these questions yourselves, may I recommend a superb book: "Fundamentals of the Faith. Essays in Christian Apologetics," by Peter Kreeft. I've given more copies of this book away than any other in my years as a priest. Kreeft teaches philosophy at Boston College, and the book is a summation of his responses to all the inquiries — and objections — college students bring up about the Catholic Faith.

The second area we need to emphasize is experience. To know about Jesus is one thing. To know Jesus is another.

I ask educators in our Catholic schools to use all the means our Catholic religion provides to lead students to Christ:

Reverent and prayerful Masses, and worthy reception of Holy Communion. Days of Recollection and Retreats. Guided examination of conscience and making a good confession. Stations of the Cross and Benediction in Lent. Processions in honor of Our Lady — especially for Our Lady of Guadalupe. Adoration of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Practicing the daily Examen, (using resources found in the Sacred Story Institute), and other forms of prayer. Practicing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Serving the poor and needy, the lonely and the elderly. Remind students that when they help in a soup kitchen or St. Vincent de Paul food pantry, they are feeding Christ in the person of the poor. And there are many more.

Most Rev. Michael C. Barber, SJ

<http://catholicvoiceoakland.org/2017/08-14/bishop.htm>

Once when I was celebrating Confirmation in a parish I decided to ask the high school age candidates some questions. I asked the group "Why do you believe in God?" The kids were shy — and terrified — and no one raised their hand. The pastor, seated on the altar behind me, shouted out, "Bobby Smith, stand up and answer the bishop!" The boy stood up in front of the entire congregation, and said clearly, "I believe in God because when I look at the universe, I see how carefully everything is designed and connected. It cannot be just by chance. I believe someone designed and created all this."

Perfect. It is St. Thomas Aquinas' "proofs for the existence of God."

I asked again, and this time a girl raised her hand, stood up and said, "I believe in God, because I can feel Him in my heart, and He answers my prayers." Intellect and experience, mind and heart, are both important in handing on our Faith.

I want to thank parents for sending their children to Catholic schools. I thank all our teachers, administrators and staff members for your hard work and example. If I could make a banner to advertise our schools, it would read thus: "Diocese of Oakland Catholic Schools — For a Christ-centered Education."

May God bless all our students as they begin this new academic year.



## Catholic Schools Are A Pillar of Church in Sudan

Dust and mud brick houses everywhere – as far as the eye can see. The houses are indistinguishable in color from the ground on which they stand. Trees are few and far between.

The road leading northwards from the Sudanese capital of Khartoum shimmers in the burning heat. The temperature tops 110 degrees. At a certain point the car turns off into an unpaved road with deep potholes, entering a residential suburb.

“Welcome to the St. Kizito School of Dar es Salaam,” says our host, Father Daniele, as we stand in the courtyard of the school, which is named after the youngest of the Ugandan martyrs. This Italian priest is a member of the clergy of the Archdiocese of Khartoum. His fluent Arabic enables him to communicate with the people of his parish in their own language.

“I belong to the Neo-Catechumenal Way and I studied at our seminary in Beirut. I've been living in Sudan now for more than 10 years” – a move he has never regretted, he tells his visitor from international Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN).

“But it is an extremely difficult pastoral challenge for priests here,” he adds. This has to do more than anything with the life circumstances of his parishioners.

Fr. Daniele explains: “They are totally uprooted people. The parishioners here are for the most part come from the Nuba mountains in the south of Sudan. Their lives there were marked by the customs and traditions of their villages. But here, far

from their homeland, they are completely lost.”

Many of the people many years ago came to the Khartoum area, in search of work or in order to escape the fighting in their homeland. But most of them can only survive as day laborers, and this eats away at the men's sense of self-worth.

“Many of them simply drift around idly when they don't have any work,” says Fr. Daniele, and many have no work at all. “In their traditional view of themselves, they are herders and warriors. But since there is no fighting no herding to be done here, all the work falls on the shoulders of the women.”

Unlike 90 percent of the Sudanese people, who are Sunni Muslims, the people of the Nuba mountains are Christians. There are often syncretic tendencies, with belief in magic rubbing shoulders with the Christian faith. For this reason Fr. Daniele attaches great importance to helping people grow in their faith. He says: “I want to show people above all that, despite their poverty, God loves them – and each of them individually.”

This is not always easy to understand for people imbued with a tribal way of thinking, he explains. But at least he has no concerns about church attendance. “The people come in large numbers to church. On Sundays our church is full,” he tells us.

“It is extremely important that the church be a beautiful and worthy place,” Fr. Daniele stresses, “as it is undoubtedly the most beautiful place in the lives of these people,

who otherwise know only their own poverty-stricken huts and homes.”

Fr. Daniele has a particular concern for the children, and the parish school is his most important resource in this respect.

“Many of the children would spend the whole day roaming around the streets if they didn’t come to us in school,” he explained. “Their parents show little concern for them. Attention, and even tenderness, is something most of them have never experienced, and above all not from their fathers.”

Fr. Daniele works hard to convey to the children a sense of their own self-worth. He says: “We want to show them that they are respected, precious people, loved by God. We do so by listening to each one of them and showing them respect.”

Precisely because the circumstances of the children are so difficult and their families so large and so poor – eight children or more is by no means unusual – the priest places great hope in the schools, saying that “however modest our means are here, without education the children will have no chance of a better life.”

Indeed, the Catholic school system is one of the pillars of the small Church in Sudan. For one Church official, who requested that his name not be used, the Church educational system is crucially important.

The official explains: “Our schools gain us acceptance among the majority Muslim community, and above all with the state. The state is strongly Islamic, but – because of the rapid population growth, the number of

people moving into cities and limited public resources – its budget is overstretched and insufficient to provide enough schools. Hence, the government is happy to see the Church involved. As a Church we maintain almost 20 public schools in the city of Khartoum alone, and permission to build schools, unlike permission to construct churches, is something that is always granted to us.”

The schools are attended both by Christians and by Muslims. The Church official acknowledges that the quality of the schools is not the best. He says: “after all, we hardly have money for teachers and books, and nor do our students.”

But no pupil is refused admittance, even if he or she cannot afford the school fees. “For the children of the poorest families the school is the only possibility of bringing a little order into their lives,” the official stresses.

ACN is committed to support the Catholic schools in Sudan.

“The Church in Sudan has asked us for help,” says Christine du Coudray-Wiehe, who oversees ACN-funded projects in Sudan.

“It is an urgent necessity to respond, as the majority of the pupils are from Catholic families from southern Sudan,” she added. “It is vital for these families that are children be able to attend a Christian school – for this is the only way we can prevent them from being Catholics at home and Muslims at school.”

Oliver Maksan

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/catholic-schools-are-a-pillar-of-church-in-sudan-42658>

## Towards a “d’Alzon option” on Education

*Emmanuel d’Alzon, founder of the Augustinians of the Assumption, grew up in the 19th century, in a post-revolutionary France that had jettisoned God. One of the chief apostolates of the Assumptionists is education, and their methodology can contribute to a renewal of public life in the United States by reminding the world that the secular worldview is not all-encompassing.*

Populists often appear when people are seeking solutions to problems arising in a country undergoing social change.

In America, both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders drew attention to our growing class divisions, our deepening political polarization, our anemic economy, and our formalized and bureaucratic education.

The question on everyone’s mind is, in two words, “What gives?”

But the answers populists have are always - at heart - political, and the problems they say they can fix go deeper than politics.

So what is the real underlying cause of the current political malaise? Secularization. It’s a feature of modern life that is more of a problem than we realize. As the Italian-German theologian Romano Guardini suggested in *The End of the Modern World*, modernity separates us from our true purpose, which is union with God.

This separation is the real problem, because it leads to more anger and coarseness, more imbalances of power, more confusion.

Of course, most people aren’t theologians, but they likely sense something is amiss. They see the confusion and coarseness of the age and want to do something about it; and so they’ve turned to these populist

politicians, mostly because they’ve forgotten how to relate to God.

Their natural religiosity has to be projected somewhere.

But this is not a new problem. In some form or another, it has been around since about the 18th century when the French Revolution upended society.

Emmanuel d’Alzon, founder of the Augustinians of the Assumption, grew up in the 19th century, in a post-revolutionary France that had jettisoned God.

In an 1830 letter to a friend, wherein he detailed his decision to become a priest, he argued, in effect, that cultures that disrupt the order of being become “lawless” and “sick.”

He couldn’t enter politics, he explained, because he would not be able to influence people in a fundamental way - and to do that, he reasoned, he’d have to separate from French culture by attaching himself to God and His Church. He eventually founded the Assumptionists to “go wherever God is threatened in man and man is threatened as image of God.”

One of the chief apostolates of the Assumptionists is education, and their methodology can contribute to a renewal of

public life in the United States by reminding the world that the secular worldview is not all-encompassing.

In America, education is often seen as a means to an end, not as an end in itself. According to the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) website, the purpose of education is to promote “student achievement” and to foster “global competitiveness.”

These buzzwords show the DOE is more about creating better employees than better people.

Emmanuel d’Alzon was not interested in such things. His vision of education was a human one. Education, he suggested, would bring the world back to sanity.

He wrote: “The deepest desire of my heart is that the world needs to be penetrated with the Christian idea. Otherwise it will fall apart. And the world will not receive this idea except through individuals who will be taken up by it.”

Without such an education, human beings will remain listless and adrift and confused. The problems we’re seeing will continue.

That’s why we need ideas. I’m going to follow Rod Dreher’s lead and propose “the d’Alzon Option.”

A d’Alzon Option would exist as a kind of middle ground between the two extremes we often see in Catholic education: Schools that, while well-intentioned, want to resurrect education as during the pre-conciliar Church; and schools that, besides the crosses hanging on the walls (if they

even have those), are no different than their public counterparts.

A spirited defense of God should be central to a truly d’Alzonian education.

But d’Alzon’s goal was not to “make [people] seminarians.” Instead, it was “to prepare them to live in the world,” to “act in a way to make others love and respect their faith,” to be “deeply attached to the cause of God.”

He believed in “education in all its forms,” and so a d’Alzon Option might have multiple components. Maybe parishes could become centers of education. In addition to CCD classes, they could offer courses on literature, history, politics - all grounded by a Christian ethos.

This is a perfect opportunity for lay collaboration, involving parishioners who are teachers or academics - or even armchair students of a particular field. It will feed an intellectual hunger which most people have.

As for schools, they should be more mission-oriented.

They’re not merely expensive alternatives for public schools; they’re not tickets into the upper middle class; and they’re not supersized versions of parish CCD programs.

They are institutions tasked with, as d’Alzon wrote, “penetrating the world with the Christian idea.”

Students who attend them should come out truly understanding the why of education, which is this: Their formation as serious,

thoughtful human beings who recognize that they exist in a reality that is more expansive and brilliant than any of them probably ever realized.

So what would be the result of “the d’Alzon option?”

We cannot expect the world would cease disappointing people, because it will always  
Jonathan Bishop

disappoint. It’s imperfect, after all. But perhaps people would develop a fuller sense of their own humanity.

And maybe, just maybe, we’ll go from asking “what gives?” to at least starting to solve some of the problems facing us.

<https://cruxnow.com/commentary/2017/06/27/towards-dalzon-option-education/>

## Skip the Debt, Get a Master's, and Start Teaching in Catholic Schools

After he graduated from college, Kevin Gregorio knew he wanted to get his master's degree in education to teach in Catholic schools.

A teacher-training program run by universities across the country has allowed him to teach while he gets his graduate degree

During his two years of graduate education as a teaching fellow at the Alliance for Catholic Education at St. Joseph's University, he taught English literature at Mercy Career and Technical High School, a co-ed Catholic vocational high school in Philadelphia.

"Education suggests what we want children to become when they're men and women. That's crucial to the welfare of society, so I felt like: What better vocation to get involved with than that?" he told the Register.

"Students don't always walk in really excited about British literature, and at first, that's a daunting challenge; but if you can get them to like it, that's a huge victory."

When students go on break at the end of the school year, teaching fellows return to their universities to take intensive summer coursework for a master's degree in education.

Young men and women like Gregorio are following their call to teach at

Catholic schools thanks to innovative, fully funded programs at Catholic universities that give them experience teaching in Catholic schools while earning credits toward a master's during their school breaks. After two years, fellows in these programs finish with a master's degree in education, no graduate-level debt and valuable job experience.

Catholic schools, for their part, get faithful, enthusiastic young teachers to lead their classrooms.

While the students the Register interviewed said the cost of a graduate degree would not have deterred them from pursuing a career in teaching at Catholic schools, the burden debt puts upon newly graduated educators is significant. A 2014 report found the average borrower for an education master's degree owed nearly \$51,000 in school loans.

A dozen Catholic universities around the country run their own graduate education programs, generally modeled after the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) program pioneered by the University of Notre Dame.

Theo Helm, communications director for Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education, told the Register that Holy Cross Fathers Timothy Scully and Sean McGraw established the program in 1993 to address the need for "talented and faith-filled energetic teachers"

in Catholic schools around the country.

“I think, famously, it started with a poster that said, ‘Tired of doing homework? Come out and give some out,’” said Helm.

Now under the umbrella of the University Consortium of Catholic Education, the programs collectively place around 400 teaching fellows every year in under-resourced Catholic schools.

While each university’s program serves different communities and has a different spirituality — Dominican, or Jesuit, or Holy Cross, among others — every graduate program commits itself to teacher formation, community living for students and spiritual growth.

Helm added each university’s role is to support these students in their ministry.

“Teachers who are out there in the field doing this program are doing it because they’re called to serve. Yes, they earn degrees, and experience, but it’s fundamentally a service program,” Helm said.

### *Learning Together*

Mercy Sister Rosemary Herron, president of Mercy Career and Technical High School, told the Register that her school has had “a great partnership over the years” with St. Joseph’s University.

“The [teaching fellows] who have come to us are generous, energetic and

willing to serve,” she said.

Sister Rosemary said ACE teachers are “great for the faculty mix.”

They leaven their community through providing enthusiasm and joy to their ministry and the occasional technological expertise, while learning from teachers who have been involved in this work for 45 years.

“I think we model for the young teachers the generosity that you have to have and the humility in learning new ideas,” she said.

Catholic education is not without its challenges, Sister Rosemary explained. For teachers who are not much older than their students, dealing with teenagers poses a challenge.

Also, Catholic school systems in dense urban areas have lost a lot of financial support, as the original populations that founded them moved away.

Public schools, particularly the growth of charter schools, Sister Rosemary added, are another threat to the continued longevity of Catholic schools, because “it’s hard to compare with free.”

Even if there is less financial support than there used to be, Catholics schools still play a vitally important role in their neighborhoods. Sister Rosemary told the Register that parents in the neighborhood, many of whom are not Catholic, and who struggle economically, choose to pay to send their children to places like Mercy because they

see its “loving environment” as a better option than public schools.

Students feel “safe, cared about and like what they’re learning.”

Teachers also become role models and advocates for their students. “It’s more than a job for our faculty — it’s a ministry,” said Sister Rosemary.  
*Forming New Generations*

The graduate fellows enrolled in Catholic teacher-training programs take their vocations seriously.

Marissa Gioffre, who just completed her first year with St. Joseph’s University ACE at St. Frances Cabrini in West Philadelphia, said her faith has grown in the classroom. One challenge of her first year has been balancing being an educator and a spiritual role model for her students, making sure they’re not only memorizing facts, but also learning how to “shape themselves in becoming good citizens and the ways to take their education into their community.”

Her own faith has also deepened through the Jesuit spirituality of the program. While a Vincentian spirituality of finding God in the people around her had been an important influence on her earlier life, Gioffre said,

Ignatian concepts like *cura personalis*, or care for the whole person, had helped her to live her faith better and care for her students through her teaching and as their choir director and basketball coach.

Amanda Heath, who graduated from the Pacific Alliance for Catholic Education (PACE) at the University of Portland, told the Register that she pursued teaching because her parents had started a school for children with special needs, and she likewise “wanted to provide the best to each child out there” as a Catholic teacher. Having graduated in 2015 from PACE, she continues to teach at Immaculate Conception School in Fairbanks, Alaska.

Heath told the Register that having teaching fellows living together in an intentional community helped develop her vocation as a teacher. In the house she lived in, the teacher-residents spent five nights a week eating in common, fostering community and deepening their faith together.

“It’s such a wonderful option that gives you teaching experience, that gives you a master’s, that gives you a community of other people who are going through the same things you are,” she said. As a result, she said, “I know I’ll always be in Catholic schools.”

Nicholas Wolfram Smith

<http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/skip-the-debt-get-a-masters-and-start-teaching-in-catholic-schools>

## From An Interview with Archbishop Carlson

**CWR:** Besides the basic statistics, tell me about the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

**Archbishop Carlson:** I think there are two things that stand out most. Among the larger 61 dioceses, defined as those having 300,000 or more Catholics, we have the best priest-to-people average. Second, although we are 41st in size among American dioceses, when it comes to kids who attend Catholic schools, we're 8th in the nation.

Catholic schools are important when it comes to vocations. Ninety-four percent of our priests went to Catholic grade schools, and 92 percent to Catholic high schools. And, most of our seminarians for St. Louis come from St. Louis. That's not the case in some dioceses. We're very blessed to have 54 seminarians for the archdiocese, and I think we'll see that number increase next year.

The roots of the faith are very deep here. We have 85 religious communities, and 27 Catholic high schools, of which about half are diocesan. It's a big question here in St. Louis when you talk to people: what high school did you go to?

**CWR:** What were some of your priorities for the archdiocese when you arrived in 2009?  
**Archbishop Carlson:** Catholic education has always been my first priority. We gave \$9.2 million for scholarships last year for poor children to attend Catholic schools. We're in the middle of a huge drive, Beyond Sunday, to raise \$100 million for our Catholic schools so we can offer more scholarships for children to attend Catholic school,

including those in the middle class.

A second priority of mine is evangelization. We were one of the first dioceses, for example, to bring in [Catholic speaker and author] Matthew Kelly to train evangelization teams for our parishes. We welcomed Catholics Come Home [which produces television commercials inviting Catholics back to church], which we estimate brought 37,000 people back to the Faith.

I'm reading a book now about the Great Commission ["Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ..."] Matthew 28:19-20]. We're all called to be missionary disciples. It's not enough to be in church every Sunday, or even every day. We have to share the Good News of the Faith.

**CWR:** Around five million attended Catholic schools in the early 1960s, vs. about two million today. Why has this decline occurred, despite the growing numbers of Catholics?

**Archbishop Carlson:** I think cost is a big issue. That's why we started our Beyond Sunday campaign to help our middle class as well as our poor families to afford a Catholic education. Catholic schools employ more lay people vs. religious in past years, and lay people require larger salaries.

Also, people are having fewer children. We have 10 percent fewer children than we did 10 years ago.

Catholic World Report

<http://www.catholicworldreport.com/2017/05/16/abp-carlson-reflects-on-catholic-education-secular-media-girl-scouts-amoris-laetitia/>