

# THE CATHOLIC EDUCATOR

*A Quarterly Journal of the Catholic Education Foundation*



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## *A Word From Our Editor*

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As we head into summer, I want to bring to your attention a few items.

First, from July 17 through 19, we shall be hosting our fourth annual seminar on the role of the priest in today's Catholic school. There is still some room for interested parties. See the details in the pages immediately following this editorial.

Second, do not miss the Wall Street Journal article which summarizes a recent study documenting the impressive behavior patterns of Catholic elementary school children in regard to the issue of self-discipline and its concomitant results in classroom and life experience. In an era of school violence and uncontrolled outbursts of anger, this should be a major selling point for the value of our educational method. The cover photo is that chosen by the WSJ to illustrate its article.<sup>1</sup>

Third, we need to pray that the upcoming synod in Rome on youth will offer concrete and worthwhile advice on how to reach and hold onto this demographic. The recently released *Instrumentum Laboris* (working document) has some good insights on the role of Catholic schools in this endeavor.

I would also call your attention to a piece written by a Catholic high school graduate of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia (now a rising senior at Notre Dame University), in which he offers his insights to Archbishop Chaput – in his capacity as an official delegate to the synod. See the entry “Thoughts on the Synod.”

In the May-June issue of *The Catholic Response*, I reflected on the importance of introducing our students to good liturgy. The rest of this column is a reprint of that piece.

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### ***Pre-Synodal Working Document***

For the most part, the final document [summarizing the input received from youth around the world] issued, allegedly, by the young participants is innocuous, although regularly peppered with “buzz words” usually indicative of a leftward tilt. Having been a teacher my entire life, I cannot imagine that the document in question was indeed written by the young people themselves as the style is bureaucratic “Church talk.” The only reason I hesitate to say this apodictically is that the frequent grammatical errors and poor sentence structure do suggest the work of this generation! I also find it rather odd that a generation that is notoriously uncatechized (through no fault of their own) are put in a position to advise a synod on what needs to be done – not unlike a patient telling the physician the remedy for one's ailment. One must hope that first shot across the bow is not the prelude to yet another manipulation of the synod process. The delegation from the United States is of very high quality, both the four bishops and the two lay women and religious Brother.

One very valuable paragraph in the document deals with the Sacred Liturgy and the sacramental life:

We long for experiences that can deepen our relationship with Jesus in the real world. Initiatives that are successful offer us an experience of God. Therefore, we respond to initiatives that offer us an understanding of the Sacraments, prayer and the liturgy, in order to properly share and defend our faith in the secular

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-catholic-school-difference-1527894168?mod=searchresults&page=1&pos=1>

world. The Sacraments are of great value to us who desire to develop a deeper sense of what they mean in our lives. This is true of marriage preparation, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, preparation for baptism of children and so forth. Because of the lack of clear and attractive presentation as to what the Sacraments truly offer, some of us go through the process of receiving but undervaluing them.

Another paragraph merits attention as well:

Adoration, Meditation and Contemplation – We also appreciate the contrast of silence offered by the Church's tradition of Eucharistic Adoration and contemplative prayer. It provides a space away from the constant noise of modern communication and it is here that we encounter Jesus. Silence is where we can hear the voice of God and discern His will for us. Many outside of the Church also appreciate meditation, and the Church's rich culture of this could be a bridge to these secular but spiritual people. It can be counter-cultural, but effective.

### ***Cult and Culture***

I would like to use the rest of this column to flesh out how these observations of the final document can materialize in a properly and effective manner.

We hear a great deal today about "culture": the youth culture, the culture of life, the culture of death, the anti-culture. And so, I would like to begin my reflections by demonstrating the connection between culture and worship. As a die-hard Latin teacher, I want to establish the etymological linkage. The word *cultura* (culture) comes from the word *cultus* (cult, as in "worship"). To enter into a language is to enter into the mindset of a people. Thus, one can say that for the ancient Romans, "culture" was rooted in "cult" or worship. We can smirk at the Greeks and Romans of old with their thousand little gods and goddesses inhabiting the Pantheon but, for all that, they still lived within a transcendental horizon. In other words, the individual human being was answerable to a higher and ultimate authority. And within that horizon, those peoples forged impressive cultures. Similarly, within the Christian scheme of things, we find that what historians have dubbed "The Age of Faith"—the High Middle Ages—produced a nearly unimaginable font of literature, art, music and architecture—unrivaled to this very moment.

On the other hand, we look at the last century and what do we encounter? What many commentators have labeled "the century of blood." Indeed, more people died in the wars and under the repressive, godless regimes of the twentieth century than in all previous eras combined. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council got it right in asserting that "without the Creator, the creature vanishes" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 36). That should be the object lesson we carry with us through this century and which we emblazon onto the consciousness of our young people.

Sociologists of religion remind us that worship always occurs within a context: cultural, political, sociological, religious. Worship forms for the Catholic community underwent a tremendous change in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council. The Council itself was needed and had great potential, but it took place in a time of unparalleled social upheaval. Not to have lived then is to be almost incapable of appreciating the degree of confusion and uprootedness which characterized the years of Vatican II and, most especially, its immediate aftermath. To many, it appeared that the train of the Church had been derailed, and one of the first victims of that crash was the Sacred Liturgy. If the plan of the Council Fathers had been followed carefully; if unlawful experimentation had not been tolerated; if unwarranted and unwise changes had not been introduced; things would have been different.

Indeed, the life of the Church would not have been so massively disrupted, as so sadly reflected in: the 75% decline in Sunday Mass attendance; the 65% decline among women religious; the loss of

approximately 100,000 priests worldwide during the last decade of Pope Paul VI's pontificate; the halving of our Catholic school system in the United States. Social theorists would warn that one cannot tinker with the signs and symbols of the liturgy without affecting the very existence of the Church. Why? Because the Church takes her life from the liturgy. It is for this very reason that Pope Benedict XVI, in particular, endeavored, step by step and brick by brick, to recapture what was imprudently discarded and to discard what was thoughtlessly introduced. Cardinal Robert Sarah has assumed Benedict's mantle in this regard.

The question then surfaces: Who are the young people whom we are seeking to introduce to a life of worship? Saint Paul showed himself to be an exemplary teacher when, before preaching to the population of Athens, he toured their city, endeavoring to learn about their culture. Although he was not totally successful in linking up the Gospel message with the cultural reality he found in Athens, he did zero in on a crucial point of reference in his discussion of the "unknown god" whom they worshiped (cf. Acts 17:23). Cult and culture merged. Following his example, many of us have sought to engage the culture of our students by listening to their music, watching their films, and learning their lingo. Educators who have been in the business for forty or more years will remark that today's youth are quite different from those we met as we embarked on our teaching careers.

### ***Tabula Rasa***

I would summarize the picture in these terms: They are, in effect, a *tabula rasa* – a blank slate, especially from a religious standpoint. Talking to them about Vatican II as though it happened yesterday (which is often the impression some folks of my generation give) has the same effect as talking to them about Nicea II. The theological battles and liturgical wars of the sixties and seventies are not on their radar screen; which is to say that they don't have the baggage of the "boomers." They tend to be rather open to traditional approaches to Catholic life and worship, perhaps as a kind of "reaction formation" to what they have experienced of instability within the Church, society-at-large, and their own families. It is also important to make a critical distinction: We are really dealing with two different groups of Catholic youth – those who are, in the main, aligned with the Church (even if not completely "on page") and those who are totally alienated (thanks to the corrosive influence of the government school system). While not ignoring the latter, our (limited) personnel and financial resources ought to be expended on the former who, if well formed, will do the best outreach to the latter.<sup>1</sup>

In my (extensive) pastoral experience with young Catholics over a forty-year period, I find those favorably disposed to the Church are well described in Colleen Carroll's book, *The New Faithful: Why Young Adults Are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy*.<sup>2</sup> If you have not read this work, you must do so, as it provides invaluable information on who these young people are, how they think and, yes, how they feel.

Permit me to quote extensively from Miss Carroll's findings. She asks:

Why are young adults who have grown up in a society saturated with relativism – which declares that ethical and religious truths vary according to the people who hold them – touting the truth claims of

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<sup>1</sup>Jesuit Father James Martin and his constant drumbeat on LGBT issues, Life Teen Masses, and the many shockingly heterodox presentations and aberrant liturgical celebrations at the Los Angeles annual religious education conferences – all of these misunderstand the proper and effective way to "reach out" to disaffected and uninterested young people.

<sup>2</sup>Colleen Carroll, *The New Faithful: Why Young Adults Are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002). Note: Since the publication of this book, Miss Campbell has married and is now identified as Colleen Carroll-Campbell.

Christianity with such confidence? Why, in a society brimming with competing belief systems and novel spiritual trends, are young adults attracted to the trappings of tradition that so many of their parents and professors have rejected? Is this simply the reaction of a few throwbacks to a bygone era, a few scattered inheritors of a faith they never critically examined? Is it the erratic behavior of young idealists moving through an inevitably finite religious phase? Or are they the heralds of something new? Could these young adults be proof that the demise of America's Judeo-Christian tradition has been greatly exaggerated?<sup>3</sup>

Boston College philosopher Peter Kreeft answers thus: "It's a massive turning of the tide." He goes on: "Even though they know less history or literature or logic" than students ten or twenty years ago, "they're more aware that they've been cheated and they need more. They don't know that what they're craving is the Holy Spirit."<sup>4</sup>

If even half of these characterizations are accurate, we have great, good reason for hope. I should mention that Carroll's findings are not limited to Catholicism; in reality, they cross denominational lines. Interestingly, much contemporary research shows the most striking turns toward tradition can be found within Judaism, where Reform Judaism has lost considerable ground, while Orthodoxy has grown by leaps and bounds, to the amazement of most observers.

Colleen Carroll relates a somewhat amusing story, which I recall from my own reading at the time:

In 1997, Father Willard Jabusch wrote a commentary piece for the Jesuit magazine *America* about the conservative bent of young Catholics. He discussed what he had seen as a priest who oversees Catholic campus ministry at the University of Chicago. Among other trends he had witnessed in the past decade, Jabusch noted student interest in the Latin Mass, the writings of Thomas Aquinas, and the early Church Fathers – as well as, in the words of one young convert, "a Church that will not be shifting under my feet."

Carroll says that "Jabusch did not expect the article to draw much reader response. So he was quite surprised when *America's* readers roared with disapproval. 'The mere fact that I brought this up – it was heresy,' Jabusch said, recounting the negative feedback he received from middle-aged liberal Catholics who expressed offense at his account of the next generation's conservatism. Considering himself a middle-of-the-road to liberal Catholic, Jabusch never imagined that his ideas would prove so controversial to other liberal Catholics. But their reactions were understandable, he said, because many baby-boomers have spent their lives pushing for progressive causes that the next generation may dismiss: 'When you've suffered like that, you take it all very personally,'" he commented.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Generational Amnesia***

Well, if that's who our target audience is, what should we be doing with them in terms of worship? I began by saying that I believed this generation was a *tabula rasa*, for better and for worse. On the positive side of the ledger, the tired ideological battles of the sixties and seventies, as well as the liturgical wars of the eighties and nineties, are not theirs; they have a profound desire to encounter God; the Church herself is in the process of reassessment and re-grouping, liturgically speaking. On the negative side of the ledger, they have little understanding of Church history and theology and, all too often, very little experience of liturgy which is uplifting and letting them obtain even a fleeting glimpse of the eternal, which is to say that the element of mystery is generally lacking. The "negatives" stack up to form a kind of collective

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<sup>3</sup>Carroll, 3.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Carroll, 81.

amnesia; actually, it's not really amnesia for them because that refers to the state of having forgotten something, whereas this generation, for the most part, has never even heard these things at all. However, "amnesia" is a useful word nonetheless because it is the amnesia of the elders (clergy, educators, parents) that has produced this gaping hole in the religious experience of these young people. And amnesia has fatal consequences for adherents to a religion whose Lord and Founder commanded them to observe *anamnesis* or sacred memory on the eve of His Passion and Death (cf. Lk 22:19). Amnesia and *anamnesis* cannot co-exist in a community or individual.

For two consecutive years, on the feast of Saint Gregory the Great, I delivered homilies at the Church of the Holy Innocents on 37th Street in Manhattan, focused on what I thought was needed for that "reform of the reform" promoted by the then-Cardinal Ratzinger. In 1996, I highlighted several "gaps" in contemporary Catholic life which make worship "in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:23) difficult, if not impossible: the neglect of eschatology in teaching and preaching; a misreading of Sacrosanctum Concilium; an exaggerated emphasis on the horizontal, to the detriment of the vertical; a lost sense of sin; excessive subjectivity; the reduction of the language, art and music of worship to the least common denominator; celebration of sacraments without requisite faith or knowledge. The following year, I identified some important needs, if the Sacred Liturgy is to fulfill its purpose: reverence; beauty; appreciation for divine transcendence; learning (or re-learning) the meaning of symbol and ritual. I would be happy to share the full text of those homilies with anyone who is interested.

Several years ago, a Sunday radio show in New York was called "Where Catholics Meet" (I don't know if it is still running). I would like to suggest that the Sacred Liturgy is the place "where Catholics meet." That fact helps explain why emotions run so high and tensions surface so readily when discussions turn toward the Church's worship life. Our privilege and solemn responsibility as parents, clergy and teachers is to ensure that our youth know, intellectually and viscerally, how to worship their Lord in the way worthy of Him and of benefit to them.

I would not be true to myself were I not to call to my side at least once the great Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman. It seems that the convert-apologist had a somewhat extended correspondence with a Protestant minister on the nature of true worship. At a certain point, the minister wrote: "Well, Dr. Newman, I suppose we shall simply have to agree to disagree. You will worship God in your way, and I in mine." With typically British wit, the Cardinal replied: "Oh no, reverend sir. You should certainly feel free to worship God in your way, but I shall worship Him in His way!" You see, liturgy – like the Faith it celebrates – never admits of an "erector-set" approach; good liturgy, true liturgy is received, not fabricated, and it takes seriously the human person in all his complexity of body and soul.

Cardinal Newman deals with this matter extensively and brilliantly in a sermon he preached fourteen years before his reception into the Catholic Church. He confronts the objections already present in his day, which sound so familiar in ours:

We sometimes meet with men, who ask why we observe these or those ceremonies or practices; why, for example, we use forms of prayer so cautiously and strictly? or why we persist in kneeling at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper? why in bowing at the name of Jesus? or why in celebrating the public worship of God only in consecrated places? why we lay such stress upon these things? These, and many such questions may be asked, and all with this argument: "They are indifferent matters; we do not read of them in the Bible."

Then he answers such objections:

The Bible then may be said to give us the spirit of religion; but the Church must provide the body in which that spirit is to be lodged. Religion must be realized in particular acts, in order to its continuing alive. . . . There is no such thing as abstract religion. When persons attempt to worship in this (what they call) more

spiritual manner, they end, in fact, in not worshipping at all. This frequently happens. Every one may know it from his own experience of himself. Youths, for instance (and perhaps those who should know better than they), sometimes argue with themselves, "What is the need of praying stately morning and evening? why use a form of words? why kneel? why cannot I pray in bed, or walking, or dressing?" they end in not praying at all. Again, what will the devotion of the country people be, if we strip religion of its external symbols, and bid them seek out and gaze upon the Invisible? Scripture gives the spirit, and the Church the body, to our worship; and we may as well expect that the spirits of men might be seen by us without the intervention of their bodies, as suppose that the Object of faith can be realized in a world of sense and excitement, without the instrumentality of an outward form to arrest and fix attention, to stimulate the careless, and to encourage the desponding.

Finally, he presents a rationale for a life of worship consonant with both the doctrine of the faith and the needs of the human person:

Much might be said on this subject, which is a very important one. In these times especially, we should be on our guard against those who hope, by inducing us to lay aside our forms, at length to make us lay aside our Christian hope altogether. This is why the Church itself is attacked, because it is the living form, the visible body of religion; and shrewd men know that when it goes, religion will go too. This is why they rail at so many usages as superstitious; or propose alterations and changes, a measure especially calculated to shake the faith of the multitude. Recollect, then, that things indifferent in themselves become important to us when we are used to them. The services and ordinances of the Church are the outward form in which religion has been for ages represented to the world, and has ever been known to us. Places consecrated to God's honour, clergy carefully set apart for His service, the Lord's day piously observed, the public forms of prayer, the decencies of worship, these things, viewed as a whole, are sacred relatively to us, even if they were not, as they are, divinely sanctioned. Rites which the Church has appointed, and with reason,—for the Church's authority is from Christ,—being long used, cannot be disused without harm to our souls.<sup>6</sup>

So, where do we go with all of this? If Colleen Carroll has accurately taken the pulse of today's youth, as she asserts without fear of contradiction, that "today's postmodern young adults are not . . . concerned with having a purely rational modern faith, . . . Instead, young adults . . . are 'rebellious' by embracing traditional worship"; and if Cardinal Newman and the tag-team of Ratzinger/Sarah is right about the nature of Christian worship; I want to propose a three-fold program for our Catholic schools (elementary, secondary, college and campus ministry programs at secular institutions – no, elementary school is not too early to begin) and to do so with much urgency. In a 2009 address to Catholic educators in Rome, Pope Benedict spoke of "a worrying educational emergency in which the task of those called to teach assumes particular importance."<sup>7</sup> "A worrying educational emergency."

### ***A Program for Catholic Schools***

The first plank in the program ought to be a serious course in the history and theology of Catholic worship, especially at the high school level. Introduce students to the "greats" of the liturgical movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to be sure, without neglecting the Fathers of the Church and the grand sweep of liturgical life spanning twenty centuries. Special attention should be given to the landmark encyclicals of Pope St. Pius X, *Tra le Sollecitudini* (on sacred music) and of Pope Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, and, of course, to Vatican II's *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

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<sup>6</sup> "Ceremonies of the Church," 14 November 1831.

<sup>7</sup> Address of 12 November 2009 to Rome's Libera Università Maria Santissima Assunta.

With the first plank in place, then the second should be providing the finest examples of liturgy for the school community through Masses, holy hours, Penance services, the Liturgy of the Hours by having recourse to beautiful vestments and vessels, and music which reflects our noble tradition with Gregorian Chant, Renaissance polyphony, and worthy hymnody; in other words, having the sacred rites executed with dignity and solemnity, thus opening the door for students to cross the threshold of the Liturgy of Heaven.

Finally, we should take the best and the brightest among our students and give them an even higher level of liturgical theology and formation, in the mode of a practicum, using them as liturgical planners. This will redound to the good of the school, to be sure; it should also have a spill-over effect for students' parishes, where they can share right now what they are learning, thus enhancing Catholic worship beyond the walls of the school and eventually reaching any parish to which they will belong for the rest of their lives.

I began this perhaps overly-long reflection by demonstrating the connection between *cultura* and *cultus*. Saint Gregory the Great saw that very same connection centuries before me, which is why he determined that the way he would transform the cesspool of the Rome of his day into a Christian civilization would be by tending, first of all, to the worship life of his flock. I submit that if it worked for sixth-century Rome, it can certainly work for twenty-first-century New York, or Los Angeles, or Oshkosh.

Colleen Carroll sums it all up admirably:

That ability – to see with the eyes of faith – is what guides today's young orthodox Christians. Whether bucking a culture that sees their morality as reactionary or fellow believers who regard their traditions as retrograde, these young believers cling to the hard gospel and holy mysteries that, they believe, make those struggles worthwhile. And they gravitate to churches that help them reverence the intimate yet mysterious God to whom they have surrendered their imaginations, and their very lives.<sup>8</sup>

“Surrendering [our] imaginations, and [our] very lives” to that “intimate yet mysterious God” – that ought to be the basis of the upcoming Synod’s outreach to Catholic youth. Spread this word and pray for its integration into the Synod’s discussions and eventual plan of action. If you do this, you will *duc in altum*.

Rev. Peter Stravinskis

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<sup>8</sup>Carroll, 86.

# The Catholic Education Foundation

invites bishops, priests and seminarians  
to participate in its fourth annual  
intensive and comprehensive three-day seminar

## The Role of the Priest in Today's Catholic School

**For whom?** Clergy who are pastors, parochial vicars, or those directly involved in the elementary or secondary school apostolate (or who wish to be) – as well as seminarians.

**When?** From 4:00 p.m., July 17 to 4:00 p.m., July 19, 2018  
(with accommodations available a day earlier or later)

**Where?** Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey  
(a ten-minute ride from Newark International Airport)

### **The Team?**

- Rev. Peter M. J. Stravinkas, Ph.D., S.T.D. (Executive Director, CEF)
- Dr. Mark Bauerlein (Senior Editor, First Things)
- Dr. Margaret Dames (Superintendent of Schools, Archdiocese of Newark) Dr. Denise D'Attore (Head of School, Regina Luminis Academy, Berwyn, PA) Rev. Michael Drea (National Chaplain for Mission & Identity, FOCUS)
- Dr. Mario Enzler (Program Director, Ecclesial Administration & Management, The Catholic University of America)
- Dr. Maureen Gillette (Dean, College of Education and Human Services, Seton Hall University)
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- Dr. Constance McCue (Director, Catholic School Leadership Program, Seton Hall University)
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- Rev. John Serio, S.D.B. (President, Salesian High School, New Rochelle, NY)
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CEF – convinced by history and the present reality – believes that the viability of our Catholic schools is largely dependent on the support and involvement of our priests. Our seminar will include workshops dealing with the following topics:

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### ***Endorsements***

*“This is a most needed initiative, and I hope you obtain a healthy response from the dioceses.”*

Cardinal Sean O'Malley, CEF board member, Archbishop of Boston

*“The role of the priest in shaping the identity and mission of our Catholic schools is indispensable. This summer's CEF conference is sure to give excellent guidance to our priests in carrying out this role with renewed dedication and wisdom.”*

Most Rev. James Massa, Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn

## Thoughts on the Synod: Solitude and Mission

With a world synod of bishops focusing on young people set for this fall, listening to the young and those involved in guiding them is important. So this week, as in recent weeks, I'm turning over my column to someone who can speak directly from the experience of a young adult.

Daniel Lindstrom, 21, is entering his senior year at the University of Notre Dame. A parishioner at St. Patrick's Church in Malvern, he's also a graduate of Bishop Shanahan High School. I'm very pleased to offer his reflections here:

*There has always been friction between heaven and earth, and throughout history the heat has been felt most by the institution that inhabits both. October's synod in Rome will look to see exactly what it is in the modern world upon which the faith of young people hinges as the attending bishops explore the topic, "Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment."*

*Discernment occurs as a result of one's ownership of the faith, and I believe that ownership comes from a personal encounter with God in the Church. I hope to explain here why the synod should consider looking for more concrete ways to give the Church's youth increased personal responsibility in their individual journeys of faith.*

*On a Sunday night this past academic year, my friends and I filed into a dorm chapel for a 10 p.m. Mass in which another, recently graduated friend was playing guitar. There was an air of mourning on campus as one of Notre Dame's residence hall directors, a religious Sister of the Incarnate Word, had unexpectedly passed away. The priest saying Mass was an older gentleman named Father Greg, and soon after he had begun Mass he*

*walked in front of the altar and addressed the chapel with a soft, broken voice.*

*He said through wet eyes, "This past week has been ... very difficult. Of course, you all know about Sister Mary, but a very dear friend from my home died as well, along with one of the members of my order. And so I just ask that you remember them in your prayers. These are the times when we have to remember how good God is, and how immense his love is for us, and so we entrust to his mercy those who have gone before us."*

*The priest's words and God's grace caused me to switch perspective for a moment, and to imagine how I might rely on God's embrace at my life's end much differently from the way I do now, surrounded by fellowship at the Holy Sacrifice.*

*It's a very exciting time to be a young American Catholic. With as much trouble as the Church faces today, much more hope is blooming (Rom 5:20). Organizations like FOCUS, the Culture Project, Lighthouse Catholic Media, and so many other works of discipleship have helped to establish and fortify pockets of young, faithful Catholic believers. Yet, Father Greg showed me that after all of the vitality of these young years, when we near the end of our journeys, our discipleship will depend on our own inner lives. There, we are vulnerable and exposed; there, we are in solitude, alone with Jesus.*

*Community is essential to the growth and establishment of a Christ-centered life, but we often overlook the fundamental connection between solitude and community. Theologian Hans Urs Von Balthasar writes in his book *The Threefold Garland*, "When giving her assent Mary was alone, since at receiving one's decisive mission for life,*

*everyone must stand alone before God and say yes; only after this, is one again inserted into community in a new way.”*

*It's in listening to God with the ears of our hearts that we're given the opportunity to say yes to God's call. It's by our personal yes that we embark on our own “decisive missions” — our vocations — and it's our mission that makes life with Christ such a*  
Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.

*wonderful pursuit to be shared with others. This is how authentic, nurturing Catholic community is built, and this is how, with renewed focus and zeal on the part of the Church, young people can claim their faith and set off on faith's great adventure.*

## The Catholic School Difference

*A new study shows the benefit of demanding student self-discipline.*

For the thousands of nuns who have served as principals at Catholic schools, their emphasis on self-discipline must seem like common sense. But a new academic study confirms the sisters are on to something: You can instill self-discipline in students, a virtue that will help them in their studies and later in life.

The study was conducted for the Thomas B. Fordham Institute by University of California-Santa Barbara associate professor Michael Gottfried and doctoral student Jacob Kirksey. The authors analyzed two waves of national data on elementary school students collected under the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study for the National Center for Education Statistics. They compared children in Catholic schools with those in public schools and other private schools, religious and secular.

The authors found statistically meaningful evidence that students in Catholic schools exhibited less disruptive behavior than their counterparts in other schools. “According to their teachers, Catholic school children argued, fought, got angry, acted impulsively, and disturbed ongoing activities less frequently,” the authors write. Specifically, students in Catholic schools “were more likely to control their temper, respect others’ property, accept their fellow students’ ideas, and handle peer pressure.” In other words, they exhibited more self-discipline.

The authors concede their findings aren’t causal, meaning there might be unobservable differences between students in different schools that account for the striking differences they have found. But the correlation is strong between the focus that

Catholic schools put on self-discipline and better student behavior. We also know that, especially in urban areas, black and Latino students who attend Catholic schools show higher achievement, higher graduation rates and higher college enrollment than those at nearby public schools.

At a time when the different suspension rates between minority and non-minority students has become a toxic debate, the authors offer three key judgments:

First: “Schools that value and focus on self-discipline will likely do a better job of fostering it in children.” If other schools “took self-discipline as seriously as Catholic schools do, they wouldn’t have to spend as much time, energy and political capital on penalizing students” for bad behavior.

Second: “Assuming that these results reflect a ‘Catholic Schools Effect,’ other schools might consider both explicit and implicit methods to replicate it.” The report notes that some “no excuses” charter schools are already doing this, through the curriculum or the way students interact with adults and teachers who model self-discipline themselves.

Third: “Don’t underestimate the power of religion to positively influence a child’s behavior.” Religion isn’t the only way to foster self-discipline, the authors emphasize, but it’s effective compared to most of the alternatives in channeling youthful energy into productive self-control.

Though the authors offer no easy prescriptions, they do say it is a “tragedy for the nation” that so many Catholic schools

continue to close when they are most

needed. Their lessons are worth preserving.

The Wall Street Journal Editorial Board

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-catholic-school-difference-1527894168?mod=searchresults&page=1&pos=1>

## If Only They Were Pagans

One of the most dismaying features of our time is not just a widespread ignorance of the Christian faith, but a hatred of religion and religious people generally, a hatred that is attributable to something worse than ignorance. Let me explain.

Suppose I am a missionary to the pagan Germanic tribes in Scandinavia. I have to deal with plenty of bad things there: blood feuds taken for granted as a way of settling disputes; bigamy for the rich and powerful; dark superstitions, including, when times are dark indeed, human sacrifice. But I do not have to deal with a hatred of the divine itself. The minds of the people will be as ready for the Good News as any pagans would be, and their groping in the dark toward the truth will not have been entirely in vain.

They won't have had the Good News distorted and slandered and made into Bad News. Their minds will not have been filled with poison. They will be like naturally strong and healthy people who have put their powers to erratic use, often to wicked use. They will not be self-made spiritual cripples.

So I would not hear, among those Germans, that the Christian faith has filled the world with bloodshed, and that—here comes the poisonously stupid charge—more people have been killed in the name of God than for any other reason.

How often, my readers, do you hear such a thing, and from people who have, unfortunately for their mental and spiritual health, gone to school, even to that thing invented by the Church, called the university? And not one bit of it is true.

I reply in this fashion, and nobody has ever countered it; all they do then is to change the subject. Almost every war in the sorry history of the human race has had nothing to do with religion. Men fight for land, wealth, glory, vengeance, blood-lust, boredom, and fear. They beg their gods for assistance, but they do not fight for those gods. The Greek city states fought one another all the time, and they shared the same religion; and their religious festivals, such as the Olympic games, were the only things that could move them to take a breather from fighting.

The Romans fought wars up and down Italy with people whose gods were indistinguishable from theirs, and then fought all over the Mediterranean world, none of it about religion. Japan was a fighting nation, never about religion. The American Indians, when the Europeans arrived, were notorious for their mutual enmities, on account of hunting grounds, grudges, fear of a growing tribe, and so forth, and their beliefs about the gods were generally the same. Genghis Khan did not fight for religion. Alexander did not fight for religion.

Islam is the outlier, and yet the Islamic states themselves, from the start, fought amongst themselves, and not primarily because of differences in religion; or rather differences gave them the “justification” for the wars that they fought for other reasons. In the whole history of the West, outside of Islam, the only real religious wars were those that occurred between Catholics and Protestants in the hundred or so years after Luther—and even those were motivated more by the designs and the ambitions of the new modern nation-states, so that we find Richelieu's France, though Catholic, casting

her lot with the Protestants in their conflict against the Catholic Hapsburgs. People will bring up the Crusades, enterprises that after Godfrey of Bouillon were generally botched; they do not trouble to ask why it took the West 400 years to mount any resistance to Islamic pressure against the eastern survival of the Roman Empire, or why the incursion into the Middle East of the Seljuk Turks, disliked also by neighboring Islamic states, moved the emperor at Constantinople to call for help.

So where are all these religious wars? The American colonies and the United States fought against the French and their allies the Indians, then against Britain twice, against Mexico, against her own countrymen in her bloodiest of wars by far, against Spain, against the central European powers, against Hitler's Germany and imperial Japan, against communists in Korea and then Vietnam, against an aggressive Iraqi state, against Serbs for some reason I have never been able to determine, against terrorist enclaves in Iraq and Afghanistan, with calls now to move against Syria—and none of it for religion. Napoleon went marauding over Europe, and he was if anything a force for the secular as against the religious. Stalin, Lenin, Mao—what gods were they attempting to satisfy when they drenched their own lands in blood?

Anthony Esolen

<https://journal.newmansociety.org/2018/03/if-only-they-were-pagans/>

That is what I mean by the poison. It is a lot easier to teach an ignorant person the truth, than to un-teach a mind-poisoned person the falsehoods he has come to hug close to him, falsehoods upon which he has built his little lean-to of intellectual vanity and bigotry.

But still we have to try, as patiently as we can, but also firmly, because other people may be watching, people less compromised by the poison. We must not merely say, "Well, the Church has made mistakes." Everybody makes mistakes, constantly.

We have to cast the ignorant charge right back in the teeth of those who make it. In this case, the questions are these: "Outside of Islam, name the religious wars you are thinking of. Be specific. While you are at it, go to China, Japan, India, the steppes of Asia, Polynesia, Australia, Indochina, and the Americas, and find for us a single civilization or a dominant culture that was not warlike. Find one. Or if you cannot do that, find for us that civilization that fought on account of religion, and not for the usual things men fight for. But if men are going to fight, please tell us why it is morally preferable to fight, not for the honor of God, but for land, wealth, glory, vengeance, blood-lust, boredom, and fear. Or do you believe that fighting for gain is superior to fighting for righteousness, even if you are mistaken about the latter?"

I have never gotten an answer to those questions.

## A World Without Hope

I've written recently that our schools introduce young people not to that guide of intelligence and beauty, Lady Faith, but to her current impostor, the bitch, Politics. Our "sins" are political, and we are to be "saved" by giving our assent to the Right Things about sex and marriage, climatic changes, organic food, the evil of Christian history, the sweet wonders of Islamic history, and so forth, till the world shall end and we can have done with it, amen. Now I will write about Lady Hope, and her impostor, Optimism.

Hope, says that philosophical poet Charles Peguy, is the little sister among the three theological virtues, cheerful and at play. Yet she leads them, and not the other way around, because she gives them the heart to go forth, just as a farmer will work for his children, the children he hopes will be greater than he is. Children receive the faith from their parents, as they receive love and love them in return, but it is in the child that the parents see hope, or the child becomes for them a bearer of hope. We have here a mystery that is so common as to be invisible. I may pray for my neighbor's welfare, as I may pray for my child's welfare, but my neighbor has not come into existence as the object of my prayer; the child is first of all an answer to prayer.

We hardly see it so, nowadays. The child is a future producer and consumer, "our greatest resource," like petroleum or something. And we train them up in seeing themselves that way. They may not simply be. They must succeed: which means, they must produce and consume, and we clap for them when and pretty much only when they prove to be very good at the game of conspicuous production and

consumption, regardless of the character of what they make and devour.

So let us try to imagine a child not of optimism but hope.

The childless Hannah prayed so fervently for a child that Eli the priest thought she was drunk, and reproached her, but Hannah said, "Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto" (1 Sam. 1:16). Hannah was one of the two wives of Elkanah. The other wife had borne sons and daughters and cast it in Hannah's teeth, as if it were a judgment of God that her womb had been shut. Elkanah loved her dearly, though, and every year when they went up to the temple at Shiloh, and Hannah wept and would not eat, he said to her, tenderly, "Hannah, why weepest thou? And why eatest thou not? And why is thy heart grieved? Am not I better to thee than ten sons?" (1:8).

Hannah was Elkanah's favorite. She did not want for love. Nor did they need another child to set them up in their old age. Why then does she want the child so badly? To silence her rival? Is that all?

If that were so, it is hard to explain what she does when she conceives and bears a son. Elkanah is ready to go up to Shiloh as always, but Hannah declines, intending to stay home until the boy is weaned, after which she will go to the temple and present him to the Lord, that he might dwell there forever (1:22). Elkanah agrees. The prayer, we see, continues, and is raised into another dimension entirely. Hannah prayed for a child, and now the child, Samuel, "Prayed of God," is dedicated to God and will himself be a messenger of prayer. Hannah feels for

him all that a mother naturally feels, for when he was still a boy, she “made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice” (2:19). Eli, moved by their devotion, blesses Elkanah and Hannah, and asks the Lord to reward them for their gift of Samuel, “and the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the Lord” (2:21).

Their devotion is in stark contrast to the lust and avarice of Eli’s sons Hophni and

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<https://www.crisismagazine.com/2018/world-without-hope#.Wqka19yAAEs.email=0A=0A--->

Phineas, who serve as priests in the temple, seizing the lion’s share of the sacrifices and fornicating with women who wait at the door of the tabernacle. For they “were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord” (2:12). The sons of Eli knew about the Lord, and they would have surely replied, if asked, that the Lord exists, and made the heavens and the earth. That counts for nothing here. “The devils also believe, and tremble,” says the apostle (James 2:19). They desire neither to pray nor to beget children that will be vessels of prayer. They are doing quite well for themselves. They are in no need of hope.

## Vermont Discriminates Against Catholic School Students

The state of Vermont has barred Catholic school students from a program that provides state-funded vouchers for high school juniors and seniors to take classes at Vermont colleges and universities.

Some are calling for the legislature to halt the discrimination and open the program to all Vermont students. Others defended the exclusion by citing concerns about the “separation of church and state.”

[But Bishop Christopher Coyne told America Magazine](#), “There’s no good argument against it in terms of the separation of church and state.”

Rick Garnett, a law professor at the University of Notre Dame, said he believed the Vermont law would be found unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Matt Archbold

<https://cardinalnewmansociety.org/report-card-catholic-schools-pray-safety-vermont-discriminates-religious-schools-walsh-univ-center-highlights-catholic-identity/>

“The ‘separation of church and state’ is an important aspect of the American tradition, but this distinction does not require and should not even permit blatant discrimination against students simply because they and their families choose qualified religious schools for their education,” he said. “This is not a debate about whether public funds in Vermont should be used to pay for religious instruction or to support religious schools. It is, instead, about whether a generally available and entirely ‘secular’ benefit should be withheld simply as a penalty for exercising the constitutional right to choose a faith-based school.”

Thankfully, three state senators have sponsored a piece of legislation that would allow private schools, including Catholic schools, to participate in the program.

We will keep you posted.

## **Ontario Catholic School Trustees Attacked for Defending Life**

The trustees of Catholic schools in Ontario who voted to prohibit Catholic schools from donating money to organizations that undermine the sacredness of life are coming under fire, according to [LifeSiteNews](#).

The Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA) strongly opposed the policy and even pushed for it to be re-voted

Matt Archbold

on, only to lose again. But now, some vocal parents and students are railing against the trustees with the media helping to publicize their protests.

An upcoming board meeting promises a continuation of the rancor against the trustees voting to support Catholic teaching. Keep them in your prayers.

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## Catholic School Asks Coach to Resign Over Same-Sex Marriage Plans

A softball coach for a Michigan Catholic school was asked to resign, after it was learned that she intended to marry her same-sex partner.

After being told that if she married her same-sex partner she wouldn't be able to continue working at the school, Kristen Nelson resigned, saying on Facebook, "I hope you can understand that I simply cannot continue to work in an environment that refuses to support me."

West Catholic High also posted a message, saying, "When someone is living outside of Church teaching or participating in behavior not in line with Church teaching and makes it known publicly, they cannot fulfill their primary mission to lead by example."

The administrators said it was Nelson's planned "public act of same-sex marriage"

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and not her "same-sex attraction" that conflicted with Church teaching.

[According to the Huffington Post](#), Bishop David Walkowiak was "grateful" to the school for standing up for the Church's teaching.

"As a mission of the Catholic Church, Catholic schools are places where students come to learn and know the Church's teachings, one of which is the definition of marriage as a union between one man and one woman," the diocese said in a statement. "For this reason, Catholic school administrators, teachers, or staff members that persist in public acts that are contrary to Catholic teachings disqualify themselves from the opportunity to continue in their leadership role within a Catholic school."

## Catholic School Fires Teacher Who Married Same-Sex Partner

Despite protests from some parents and teachers, Saints Peter and Paul School in Miami, Fla., fired a first-grade teacher just days after she married her same-sex partner.

“I consider her the Mother Teresa of teachers,” said one confused parent, [according to the New York Times](#).

“This weekend I married the love of my life, and unfortunately I was terminated from my job as a result,” Morffi wrote on Instagram. “In their eyes I’m not the right kind of Catholic for my choice in partner.”

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Mary Ross Agosta, director of communications for the Archdiocese of Miami, said in an email that Morffi was fired because she violated a contract which mandates that teachers abide by Catholic teaching.

Four teachers who reportedly attended the wedding ceremony were warned against posting pictures or attending events that would be considered supportive of same-sex marriage.

## **New Theology of the Body Program for Ontario**

Sister Helena Burns, the vocations director of the Daughters of St. Paul in Toronto, is launching a Theology of the Body certificate program through Sacred Heart College in Peterborough, Ontario, that will be available both in-class and online, [according to the Catholic Register](#).

During the eight-week course, students will receive comprehensive training in

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theological and philosophical concepts taught by St. Pope John Paul II.

Burns said she believes the Theology of the Body isn't taught often enough and that its teachings offer answers to some of the most pressing questions of our day. "The Catholic Church has this treasure that we need to unpack," she said. "It's a Bible study of the body."

## **Bishops' Chairmen Urge Support for First Amendment Defense Act**

Archbishop Joseph Kurtz of Louisville, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee for Religious Liberty, and Bishop James Conley of Lincoln, chairman of the Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage, [came out strongly in support](#) of the newly reintroduced First Amendment Defense Act, a religious liberty protection bill that would prevent the federal government from discriminating against religious schools, businesses and individuals holding to the truth that marriage is a union of one man and one woman.

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“FADA is a modest and important measure that protects the rights of faith-based organizations and people of all faiths and of no faith who believe that marriage is the union of one man and one woman,” the bishops said. “For example, in a pluralistic society, faith-based charitable agencies, and schools should not be excluded from participation in public life by loss of licenses, accreditation, or tax-exempt status because they hold reasonable views on marriage that differ from the federal government’s view.”

## An Alternative to Common Core and College Board Testing

Regardless of whether you are a Catholic educator, a classical educator or both, standardized testing has an influence on what you do. Even if your school never mentions the SATs or ACTs in any classes, your students have to concern themselves with these tests for their collegiate aspirations. While some colleges have adopted test optional policies for admissions, most colleges still require one of the two major entrance exams for scholarship competition. And if you're a college counselor these days, you know that college counseling has less to do with admissions and more to do with scholarships and financial aid packages. With the high cost of higher education, it's not a matter of getting into a college, it's a matter of how to afford it.

So if you are not familiar with the connections between the SATs, College Board and Common Core, it's worth connecting some of the dots to better understand what kind of influence is being exerted on our schools and students. Here are a few facts to help you consider the world of testing further.

A good place to start is [David Coleman](#), the current president of College Board, the company behind the SATs and many other tests like the PSATs and AP tests. (College Board is technically a non-profit that reports over [\\$1 billion in annual gross receipts and over \\$1 billion in assets](#). Testing is big business!) Before College Board, Coleman co-founded Student Achievement Partners, which played a lead role in developing the Common Core State Standards. More specifically, Coleman, who is widely acknowledged as the architect of Common Core, is largely responsible for writing the English Language Arts portion of the

Common Core Standards. Criticism of the Common Core Standards, both from a [Catholic perspective](#) and a [classical perspective](#) are well founded and easy to find.

Shortly after Coleman became president of College Board in 2012, it was announced that the SAT would undergo a major revamp. It was obvious that one of the major reasons was to have the SAT test more closely aligned with Common Core. In a Pioneer Institute [report](#), mathematician James Milgram and testing expert Richard Phelps explained that aligning the SAT with Common Core essentially converts it from a test predicting college success to one that simply measures high-school achievement.

It is well-known that Common Core places much more emphasis on informational text at the expense of literature. So predictably the SAT test follows this shift in the required reading analysis in its verbal testing section. Another result is that the vocabulary tested follows the emphasis on informational texts over literary vocabulary.

Coleman [explained](#) it this way, “When we redesigned the SAT last year, we said goodbye to SAT words. We will instead measure students’ understanding of words they will use over and over again—words that open doors in college coursework and career training—words like ‘synthesis’ and ‘analysis.’”

Average scores from the new SATs were significantly higher. College Board even [produced](#) a comparison guide that says a 730 on the new Math section is like a 700 on the old Math section. “In 2012, the ACT became the most popular college-admissions test in the country. Many of the changes the

College Board had made to the test appear to be designed to make the SAT more attractive to students, states, and school districts, which are increasingly paying for students to take the exam during the school day.”

By now you should be sensing that profit is a major driving factor in the testing industry. In fact, the LA Times [reports](#) that every major revision in educational standards offer testing companies and textbook publishers a bonanza in new captive revenue. The testing companies also leverage their market share to capitalize on another area of big business—the sale of student information. College Board and ACT say that they only share information when students opt in, but it is usually couched as receiving information from colleges and universities that are a good fit for the student. What student doesn't want to be courted by college and universities?

It should also be noted that College Board entered into a partnership with Khan Academy ([a \\$100 million non-profit](#)) to offer official free SAT test prep. In fact, a Khan Academy test prep question actually appeared on an actual SAT test.

In case you are wondering, there is a similar story to the ACTs, the other major college entrance exam. ACT Inc. ([a \\$770 million non-profit](#)) was also involved in the development of the Common Core State Standards and had most of its testing (primary and secondary level) aligned with Common Core from the beginning.

There is an alternative of which educators should be aware. The [Classic Learning Test](#) was created in 2015 and “invites students to wrestle with works of the greatest minds in the history of Western thought across literary and mathematical

content.” This description alone is a welcomed addition among the two heavy-weight testing companies. You can also tell a lot from the company CLT keeps. Among the colleges that accept CLT scores for admissions are several [Newman Guide](#) schools like Christendom, Franciscan, Thomas Aquinas College and University of Dallas. There are also several [Catholic Honor Roll](#) high schools that serve as testing sites for the CLT like Holy Spirit Prep (Atlanta), St. Augustine Academy (Ventura, CA) and St. Francis Xavier HS (Appleton, WI).

In full disclosure, I should state that I am a member of CLT's Academic Board of Advisors. As a teacher and administrator for over 12 years, I have seen the kind of influence SAT and ACT exert onto our students. As a result, these secular giants have an undue influence on secondary schools and colleges alike. Now with the complete alignment to Common Core, it is just more obvious that SAT and ACT are big businesses out to rake in profit under the non-profit mantle and reinforce information training instead of true education in the process. So I was eager to be involved with any classical alternative.

Since being involved in CLT and serving as a testing site, I have been greatly impressed with the product and I am proud to be a part of the initiative. The CLT exam is a test classical educators can truly support. A casual cruise through one of its practice tests will take you through readings from C.S. Lewis and Dostoyevsky. In terms of something more concrete, I think one of my students captured it best when he, in teen parlance, said, “It was more stuff like we study here.” Even if the articulation was non-classical, I'll take it as a confirmation that there now is a national standardized test that better coincides with the educational

mission of our school. When considering the facts surrounding SAT and ACT, the [CLT](#)

[Exam](#) is worth a further look.

Mo Woltering

<https://www.crisismagazine.com/2018/alternative-college-board-common-core#.WrjrTMZk-uk.email>

## Pornography and Education Part 2: Reopening Windows of Wonder

*Catholic educators and families have a duty to expose and expunge pornography as an enemy of Catholic formation.*

My school was recently visited by two monks from the Benedictine Monastery in [Norcia](#), Italy. After talking to our students joyfully about the monastic life, they told the faculty gravely that one of the main reasons they turn down their many applicants is the problem of pornography. They gave us their opinion that there is no one, no boy particularly, who has not been exposed to the innocence-shattering evil of pornography—and that it is a problem that keeps people from God and from education.

In a recent [article](#) for the Journal, I wrote on the obstacle that pornography introduces to education by wounding the sense of wonder and the sacred. As a follow up, I here present three strategies to face and fight pornography's interference with education—strategies for students who have been victimized by a society swallowed in the swirl of sexual perversion. Some of these courses are difficult to practice, but extraordinary problems call for extraordinary solutions.

One way to eliminate the lure of internet pornography is to eliminate the internet. At our school, a boarding school, a policy of technological restriction is mandatory and unmitigated—our students do not have access to computers or cell phones. Though the general purpose of this rule is not simply to avoid the presence of internet pornography, it does achieve that particular purpose. Disconnected from the web, boys do not encounter pornographic imagery as often as they would online, and certainly the temptation to access it is eradicated.

Online media is designed to distract, and online pornography is chief among these distractions. Education is the opposite of distraction. Students should be given, as Chesterton said, eternal standards and values by which they may judge material conditions and in an environment that does not have to compete with the cacophonies of the internet. Education is about the mysteries of internal and external reality, making virtual reality best left out of the picture together with its aspects that retard education, like pornography.

Though the internet offers a multitude of goods, it is not necessarily a tool that is appropriate for the young, especially given the popularity and prevalence of internet pornography. The power of the virtual world is one that renders it especially dangerous to those who are not yet equipped to wield its power. They should learn the proper use of modern devices after learning the proper use of their minds and hearts. It is best to foster natural faculties before subjugating them to bad and addictive habits.

Silence on the subject of pornography is among pornography's greatest strengths. Few are at ease speaking about pornography, so it goes unspoken; which is partly why it goes unchecked. Comfort in conversation, however, is often within the control of elders when speaking to youngsters so long as the adult is confident. In my experience, matter-of-fact dialogue about pornography with teenage boys is met with gratitude rather than grief. Pornography is a given in the lives of boys and, if treated as such without hesitation, adults gain a rhetorical advantage in discussion.

Pornography is taboo, but not as a subject of frank debate with those who are targeted and tainted by it.

Parents and teachers should never refrain from talking straightforwardly to youth in their care about other wrongs rampant in our culture and pornography should join these topics; especially since young men are more likely to encounter and be drawn towards pornography than to many other moral corruptions. To avoid it is a failure in responsibility and a denial of the condition that all boys are in: a state of damage caused by the rampant violation of human holiness. Pornography is high among the diseases of the day and it must be addressed, even at the risk of embarrassment. Pornography is, at its core, a lie; and a surefire way to combat falsehood is truth. Conversation about pornography that is direct can repel its effects more effectively than internet filters.

A final measure to correct the distortions of pornography is, in a sense, the most difficult because it involves reviving, to some degree, what is unrecoverable. Pornography destroys innocence and, once lost, innocence cannot be fully restored. Some of the qualities of innocence, however, can be regained. Wonder is one of those attributes, and one that is essential in the art of education. To an adolescent whose sense of wonder has been broken by pornography,

Sean Fitzpatrick

<https://journal.newmansociety.org/2018/03/pornography-education-part-2-reopening-windows-wonder/>

wonder can seem a foreign or, worse still, a foolish thing.

Adolescence is an age that burns like fire. It is an age primed for wonder, though often robbed of the experience to wonder purely. There arises in adolescents an appetite for principles as well as for pleasures. This double preoccupation is often an effort to discover who they are and how they fit into reality. Wonder wrestles with realities, and as such, is the remedy for pornography's unreal revels.

Teaching wonder involves a transparent reaction to the good, true, and beautiful, openly savoring and praising the sublimity of creation and emotion. Educators may thereby reopen the windows of wonder, providing a healthy outlet for students to cope with their inward contradictions and help them comprehend the mysteries they are drawn to contemplate through wisdom. Teachers must reintroduce the act of wondering and assist in giving form and meaning to things that are sullied by the poison of pornography.

I tend to agree with the monks: all boys have been harmed by pornography and something must be done. If indeed everyone has been exposed to pornography, Catholic educators have a duty to expose pornography and expunge it as the enemy it is aggressively and unapologetically.

## Teaching Tenth-Graders about Chesterton and the Saints

*An inspired and inspiring Catholic high school in Greenville, S.C.*

In my travels, I am often engaging with the best of Catholic education at both high school and college level. I wrote recently for the Journal about my time with the folks who are doing such a splendid job with the Catholic Studies Program at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn., and also about my joyful and edifying experience at the fundraising gala of the Chesterton Academy of the Holy Family in Lombard, Ill. It is, however, more unusual for me to visit the good Catholic schools on my own doorstep in South Carolina. One such school is St. Joseph's, a private Catholic school in Greenville, which is celebrating twenty-five years since its opening.

St. Joseph's is, by any stretch of the imagination, a wonderful success story. Founded in 1993 by nine lay founders, with the assistance of a solitary donation of \$800, it was the first Catholic high school in the Upstate, opening its doors in August of that year with an enrollment of thirteen ninth grade students. Initially based in a small house leased to the school for one dollar by a local Lutheran church, it now has an enrollment of almost 700 students in grades six through twelve and is situated in a centrally-located custom-built campus sprawling across 36 acres of land.

My own occasional association with the school began way back in 2006 when I was honored to accept the invitation to be that year's commencement speaker. On a couple of other occasions, several years later, I was invited to address the student body, speaking on the Catholicism of The Lord of the Rings on one occasion and offering my own personal testimony and conversion story on the other. It had, however, been a good

many years since I had set foot on campus. Then, a couple of weeks ago, one of the teachers at the school invited me to guest teach his tenth-grade class, which had been assigned the Ignatius Press edition of Chesterton's Saint Francis of Assisi, to which I had written the introduction.

At the teacher's request, I began by giving a brief account of my own conversion story, concentrating on the pivotal part that Chesterton played in my journey. I then spoke briefly about Chesterton himself and about Chesterton's lifelong devotion to St. Francis, asking the students what they thought Chesterton and St. Francis had in common. After all, I said, St. Francis lived a frugal and simple life whereas Chesterton famously enjoyed good food, good wine and a good cigar. What they had in common, however, and in spite of such differences, was a shared humility that enabled them to see the simplest things in God's Creation, such as "Brother Sun" and "Sister Moon", with eyes wide-open with wonder. Then, wishing to tie in my discussion with Chesterton's life of St. Thomas Aquinas, which I knew that the students were also reading, I spoke of the four-fold process of perception of which St. Thomas speaks in the Summa: humility, wonder, contemplation and dilation. Humility opens the eyes to wonder, which leads to contemplation, the fruit of which is the dilation of the mind and heart to the presence of God in His Creatures. This was what united Chesterton and St. Francis, I said, and, what is more, it should unite all of us, each of whom is called to the humility which leads to the opening of the heart and mind to reality.

As the class came to an end, I felt privileged to have been able to share myself and my knowledge with these tenth-grade students

in the knowledge that they were also privileged to be students at St. Joseph's, a truly inspired and inspiring Catholic school.

Joseph Pearce

<https://journal.newmansociety.org/2018/03/teaching-tenth-graders-chesterton-saints/>

## Catholic Schools and Student Virtue

Until now, there has been little research performed within the school choice debate about character and student virtue.

In contemporary society, families of means have had the opportunity to enroll their children in the school of their choice—either in tax-funded public schools or tuition-based private schools.

In the early 1990s, a revolution in school choice began with educational vouchers. The Milwaukee Parental School Choice Program gave low-income families public funds in order to have their children educated in private and religious schools. Other states began similar programs. In 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court declared the Cleveland (Ohio) Scholarship and Tutoring (voucher) Program constitutional on the grounds that these programs do not violate the establishment clause as parents can use these vouchers in the public, private, or religious schools of their choice.

Since 1990, the onset of vouchers has allowed researchers to make comparisons between voucher and non-voucher students of similar socio-academic backgrounds. It became a simpler task to compare student academic achievement in public and private schools. To date, the overwhelmingly positive effects of voucher students have been shown over their counterparts attending traditional public schools.

Yet, for those of us concerned with the holistic development of children, success in academics is not the only criterion. “Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all,” wrote Aristotle. Importance must not only be ascribed to mental growth, but also to the physical, social, and emotional growth of students.

With this need in mind, many schools now offer character education programs with what is called Emotional Intelligence (EI), and it’s gaining in prominence as an educational term. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. proclaimed, “Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.”

Until now, there has been little research performed within the school choice debate about character and student virtue. Therefore, almost 900 students attending Catholic schools in the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring (voucher) Program took a survey on various aspects of student virtue that revealed some interesting findings with regard to the length of time students have attended Catholic schools.

School stability is important to the discussion of educational vouchers as the school choice movement has wrought the unintended consequence of increasing student mobility across different types of schools, from charter and magnet public schools, to private and religious schools. It may be assumed that school stability leads to greater student achievement, though this may not be so in all cases. For example, numerous successful and productive citizens grew up as military children both at home and abroad, having changed schools frequently in the course of their K-12 education. However, more times than not, school mobility for individual students has created gaps in learning, not to mention frequent upheavals in teachers, classmates, and environments that make it difficult for youngsters to progress through school on a trajectory conducive to optimal, holistic growth. Studies have shown that frequent school mobility harms students’ academic

progress and behavior. Rates of mobility are highest in urban school districts.

[In my Cleveland voucher program study](#) (2014), five significant peace-enhancing student virtues were found in students with greater stability in Catholic schools: students' commitment to physical nonviolence, self-denial, sense of belonging, commitment to community, and morality.

Now, the absence of violence does not constitute authentic peace, but certainly is a building block thereof. A greater commitment to physical nonviolence was found for upperclassmen over their younger classmates in middle and high school, substantiating positive growth over time. Moreover, the overall commitment to physical nonviolence favored those with a greater percentage of Catholic education over those with less Catholic schooling. Additionally, those with more years in the same school display greater commitment to physical nonviolence. All told, a greater commitment to physical nonviolence occurs with greater stability in a Catholic school.

A greater commitment to self-denial and sense of belonging was also found for students with greater school stability and higher percentage of Catholic education. In an often me-first culture, it's comforting to know Catholic schools holding fast to Jesus' words: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (Matt 16:24).

A commitment to community and a sense of morality in the Catholic tradition were found to be greater for students with more Catholic education and school stability, as should be the case. With a sense of belonging and commitment to community, students in Catholic schools are less apt to fall through the cracks or chasms, as some

would say, of loneliness and despair. In contrast, government schools simply cannot offer holistic education because the spiritual dimension is avoided. This often leads to emptiness and tragedy. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (#27), "The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for."

Summarizing, those with more Catholic education coupled with more years-per-school display a greater amount of student virtue with regard to the important building blocks of peace.

School choice options for families who want to partake of it, regardless of socio-economic status, have been gaining momentum over the years. Therefore, families would be wise to educate themselves about available school choice options. Annually shopping for new and better schools could ultimately prove to be counterproductive to children's social and emotional development based on the evidence showing greater amounts of school stability to be supportive of growth in student virtue.

As such, it may be wise for parents to gain an understanding of their children's learning styles and interests to find schools better matching their learning needs over the long haul. With growing numbers of thematic schools made available, parents have a wider range of educational choices and need to educate themselves about their range of options. School proximity may be a factor for families to consider, too. It may be that the school within walking distance doesn't offer the quality of education that a more distant one offers. However, by attending the neighborhood school, the child saves

time for activities near home, becoming more engaged in the life of the family and the local community. Assuming we all agree that Catholic schools are the most conducive to supporting growth in virtue, let us

continue to debate the pros and cons of parish schools, regional schools, and home schools in the Catholic tradition.

Dave Rojeck

<https://journal.newmansociety.org/2018/03/catholic-schools-student-virtue/>

## Christology and Classical Education

*Classical education is the ideal way to cultivate our relationship with the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life in a fundamentally deeper way.*

A few years ago, our family went on a camping trip with another family. After the kids went to bed, my wife and I were having a nice conversation with the other couple by the camp fire.

The wife of the other couple was relating how a recent homily made her feel a little bad about not doing enough to cultivate a personal relationship with Jesus. As the conversation went on, I started to realize that many of us are influenced by a Protestant notion of relationship with Jesus. Don't get me wrong, we all need to work constantly on our personal relationship with Our Lord, but I think many of us don't realize how many ways we can encounter Christ. Catholic Christology is so much deeper than the Protestant notion of accepting Jesus as our lord and savior.

In a way, the depth of Catholic Christology is highlighted in the "Last Gospel," read at the end of every Extraordinary Form Mass. The Last Gospel is meant to remind us of the metaphysical reality of Christ—The Word. "All things came to be through Him" (John 1:3). With the Word as the fundamental origin of all creation, we encounter Christ aesthetically, morally, intellectually, and of course, sacramentally.

Catholic classical schools try to integrate all these deeper ways of encountering Christ in the everyday educational experience. In fact, classical education is the ideal way to cultivate our relationship with the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life in a fundamentally deeper way. One of the metaphysical bedrocks of Catholic Christology is the passage from

John 14:6, "Ego sum via et veritas et vita." Christ is the Truth. Classical education, first and foremost, is dedicated to leading students to truth in the classroom. Thus, classical education's mission is a profoundly personal mission—a Christological mission. When Pilate asked Jesus, "Quid est Veritas?" it makes sense that Jesus does not answer him because Truth was standing right in front of him, staring him in the face. When the classroom is dedicated to Truth, Christ is standing right there. When we defend truth in the midst of secular society, we are defending Christ. When we try to live the truth in our lives and in our families, we are putting on Christ. This is a profound part of cultivating our relationship with Christ.

In John 14:15, we are provided with the Christological dimension of ethics. Jesus says, "If you love me, keep my commandments." In Matthew 19, where Christ encounters the rich young man, Jesus goes further and teaches that we have to follow Him without reserve in order to inherit eternal life. This is known as the *sequela Christi*.

In the daily life of a school, as mundane as it can be, the following of rules and striving to fulfill expectations is a part of our relationship with Christ. Classical education is based on the traditional concept of virtue and challenges students to grow in virtue. Through free choices, we all define our character. This is only possible through Christ. We are transformed in Christ the closer we become to Him. The moral life is profoundly Christological. Therefore, a classical school must always strive to

emphasize virtue in the moral life. The dynamic of growing in virtue through the One who is the Way, makes following the rules much more exciting than most students realize. Classical schools are in the best position to promote the life of virtue in everyday school life through a vigorous study of the classics, starting with Aesop's Fables through Aristotle and Cicero all the way to Veritatis Splendor.

In the third part of John 14:6, Christ said, "I am Life." This is both a personal and metaphysical statement. Any time the dignity of human life is attacked, Christ is attacked. Any time a child is killed in the womb, Christ is attacked. Any time the elderly, disabled, or chronically ill are euthanized, Christ is attacked. Any time a politician supports abortion and euthanasia, Christ is attacked.

Any time we speak out against the evil of abortion and euthanasia, we are defending Christ. Any time we give witness to the dignity of human life in front of abortion centers, we are defending Christ. Any time we uphold and model the blessings of children, faithful and permanent marriage, and respect and care for grandparents, we are defending Christ. These things are all a part of cultivating our relationship with Christ.

There is one more important consideration of Jesus' identification with the Way, the Truth, and the Life. These three identifications: The Way, the Truth and the Life, are really Christ identifying with the

Mo Woltering

<https://journal.newmansociety.org/2018/03/christology-classical-education/>

transcendental of the ancient philosophers: Bonum, Verum, et Pulchrum. Christ is saying, "I am the Good, the True and the Beautiful."

This means that the encounter with beauty is an encounter with Christ. This is why the study of music and art is so crucial at a classical school. This is also why we take time and effort to make Holy Mass beautiful every day. Performing sacred music helps us explore great art, and performing it makes the performer an artist, too. Studying art and beauty, acquiring a taste for beauty in life and nature and even training our minds and bodies to produce beautiful things are all profound ways to deepen our relationship with Christ.

The last Christological dimension of classical education is obvious. Classical schools know intuitively that the Holy Mass is a central element of their education and formation. I always tell parents, the encounter with the One who is Truth at the altar only helps with the encounter with Truth in the classroom. Thus, having daily Mass at our school is both a matter of piety and pedagogy.

The richness of Catholic Christology allows us to have a deep, multi-dimensional relationship with Christ. Catholic classical education is one of the best environments to come to know Christ, because the wisdom and tradition of the ancients naturally takes us from Christ's "Ego sum Via, Veritas et Vita" to the Bonum, Verum, et Pulchrum.

## A Catholic Educator and a Revolutionary

*In France, Ferdi McDermott is doing something unique and extraordinary in faithful Catholic education.*

One night last month, in an upstairs room of a London pub, I was sitting listening to revolutionary talk. “Education is about freeing minds!” he said. The battleground for the revolution in question was education. The revolutionary speaking was [Ferdi McDermott](#).

When I first came across McDermott in the late 1990s, he was the prime mover behind a number of innovative publishing ventures. He started the St. Austin Press and launched the [St. Austin Review](#), a magazine now edited by Joseph Pearce. Both of these ventures formed part of a wider manifesto to rebuild Christian civilization through the arts and the renewal of culture. And yet, when all seemed set fair for a renaissance in the world of Catholic letters, McDermott, its main catalyst, vanished.

To be more exact, McDermott disappeared to France to start a school. At the time, I remember many saying that it was all folly and would end in tears: Even for experienced educators, education was a neverending challenge. In 2002, [Chavagnes International College](#), a boarding school for boys, was founded with just 10 pupils. The fact that today it continues and continues to flourish proves the naysayers wrong. The intervening years have proved as much a source of surprise for those watching as for those concerned in the adventure.

The day after the talk I met with McDermott in London to hear more of his plans for revolution.

“A Catholic school is the most valuable thing in the world,” McDermott says, and in

so doing summarized his ongoing motivation. It is fair to say that education, and Catholic education in particular, have been the twin drivers of McDermott’s life for the last 20 years. Even when working in publishing, it was his work with and for Catholic educators that most interested him. The challenges involved, the scale of those challenges, and the prize of meeting them are the enterprise to which he has devoted his life since. Still, that doesn’t answer the question: Why go all the way to France to set up a Catholic school?

McDermott’s move to France was a pragmatic and perhaps a providential one. He responded to the offer of a former junior seminary in the Vendée that was then standing unused. Upon visiting Chavagnes, McDermott immediately saw that the building and land around it, to say nothing of the welcome afforded by the local bishop and diocese, provided the basis on which to build his education venture.

Proud of its many Catholic martyrs during the terrors of 1789 and beyond, the Vendée has historically been a stronghold of Catholicism. Now, a counter-revolution in Catholic education has begun in the Vendée if one conducted mainly in the English tongue. Initially, most of the pupils at Chavagnes came from the British Isles. That is now changing as more boys come from across Europe as well as others from North America. The school was and continues to be truly international in its outlook.

This is apt as the education on offer draws on and offers the richest traditions of Western Civilization. As McDermott says,

Chavagnes offers “a classical education for a 21st century boy.” As well as traditional subjects, there is an emphasis on learning Latin and singing plainchant, with Holy Mass offered each day. The quality of the school choir is by all accounts exceptional.

At Chavagnes, the teachers stroll the corridors in gowns, embodying a living tradition of learning and giving the air of a bygone era in British education, if one lately made fashionable again via the fantasy of Harry Potter’s Hogwarts. Having spoken to some of the school’s past and present pupils, the atmosphere created is one that its charges clearly enjoy. Nevertheless, McDermott wants to create something new from the European legacy of a classical, Christian education.

“Love of man and love of God, as ultimate expressions of the Good, the True and the Beautiful—[that] is what education is all about... At Chavagnes the finality of all that we study is the Truth Himself, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. And as Blessed John Henry Newman and St. John Paul II so tirelessly taught, there can be no conflict between Faith and Reason, because both are bound up in a love for truth.”

Listening to McDermott, then, there is nothing nostalgic or narrow about what he is planning. His vision is nothing less than an education that will play its foundational part in a broader vision of a new Europe returned to its Christian roots. Although raised a Catholic, McDermott’s own education was at an Anglican Public School in his native Southampton. The experience marked him in two ways. First, the experience of being a Catholic in a non-Catholic school made him an “apologist” for the faith from an early age. Secondly, his experience of the kindness and the care of the teachers for their pupils also left its mark. Both of these

formative aspects he wishes to emulate at Chavagnes.

The pupils of Chavagnes are taught through the medium of English. From its inception the school might have been seen as an eccentric Anglophone plant in rural France. Thus far this has not been the case. In fact, as McDermott is quick to point out the biggest supporter of the venture from the start has been the local diocese. The fact that the school is now attracting pupils away from the excellent French school system speaks of the unique contribution Chavagnes makes. After nearly two decades, it appears that Chavagnes International College is here to stay; but, intriguingly, it is the first of a number of new educational enterprises.

Plans are afoot to open another school in the autumn of 2020. Again, it is a boarding school for boys, this time located on the French Riviera. What has been tried and tested at Chavagnes will now be offered on the Côte d’Azur. This new school is not all that is planned, however. McDermott’s education revolution is now moving into further education.

The idea of a third level Catholic educational institution is McDermott’s most ambitious project to date. This is in keeping with one of his characteristics, namely, his ability to see and act upon a bigger canvas than most. The need for a Catholic university is obvious to anyone familiar with what further education has become in the West—years when many young Catholics fall away from the faith. McDermott’s own time at Edinburgh University showed him even then the need for a more holistic, and, simply, a more holy experience for all concerned at university. His plans for a third level education establishment, a Studium, are for a return to that more holistic, more organic union of faith and learning, one

called for by St John Paul II in *Ex Cordae Ecclesiae* (Aug. 15, 1990).

As McDermott says: “The Studium hopes to bring to Catholics and others on this side of the Atlantic an education in the liberal arts tradition which Europe has lost and needs to recover if it is to be faithful to itself and to its heritage. At the same time, we offer to Americans the chance to rediscover the roots of the western tradition, right in the heart of Europe. And their coming here to study could be part of a renaissance of European Christian learning that Europe desperately needs. They might well be missionaries as well as pioneers!”

McDermott has already put one key component in place. The Studium’s liberal arts degree is accredited by ICES, the Catholic university in the Vendée, and by Lublin University in Poland. The existing grounds and buildings at Chavagnes will provide ample accommodation for the new educational institute, at least initially. McDermott has already recruited the faculty to start the enterprise this fall.

K.V. Turley

<https://journal.newmansociety.org/2018/03/catholic-educator-revolutionary/>

Vocation is clearly the key to all this. And yet, McDermott’s vocation as an educator speaks to a broader vision of rebuilding Christian Culture. “We prepare the soil for the seeds of faith to grow,” he says. To some, his life to date may seem adventurous. The reality has been the hard slog of creating an educational establishment and persevering with it through thick and thin—the mark of a true vocation. During the last 15 years, he has experienced all the challenges and pleasures, joys, trials, and achievements that one would expect in running an independent school. Still, he admits to enjoying every minute of it and, looking at him, this does indeed appear to be the case.

Where the next 15 years takes McDermott, his two schools, and nascent university shall be interesting to see. Thinking on this, as we said goodbye, I remembered the Chavagnes naysayers of 15 years ago. They have been proved wrong. In the light of that, it would seem foolish to underestimate Ferdi McDermott and the revolution he is fermenting.

## The Big Lie and a Generation Abandoned

*CWR recently corresponded with Mr. Beaulieu about today's youth, how social and cultural changes have influence and shaped millennials, the New Evangelization, human ecology, the culture of death, and the upcoming Synod focused on youth and the Church.*

**CWR:** The title of your book is intriguing: “A Generation Abandoned—Why ‘Whatever’ Is Not Enough” (Rowman & Littlefield/Hamilton Books, 2017). What are you getting at and who do you think might pick up this book?

**Peter D. Beaulieu:** Millennials sometimes confide, finally, that they feel disconnected, lonely and “abandoned”—their word and it’s true. The “tyranny of relativism” and “moral relativism” are terms that apply, but mean something only to those already in the choir. Part of my purpose is to find images and terms that might say things in a new way, especially for the younger generation of “whatever.” It is not convincing to imply or even assert, absolutely, that there are no absolutes. “Does the fireman negotiate with the fire?”

Will young people actually read this book? Possibly, if they are among those who are willing to “un-know” things that we know, but that aren’t actually true. Others who work with young adults should find some hints to fold into their own efforts.

**CWR:** Given that the culture wars are not yet history, what is different about your book?

**Beaulieu:** The overall theme is the myth of “social evolution” and the abandonment of the younger generation into the nihilism of identity politics. Discarded is our inborn birthright of more grounded personal worth and the common good. The book beckons a few readers to say maybe

nothing more than, “Hey, I never thought of things quite that way before.”

Reliance is placed on real-life, short narratives, mental images and some bits of history that stick. It is not delivered as from a podium. Many of the episodes are unique personal experiences from one who was once younger (a recycled millennial!), from within those signature events that have shaped the past half century: life in the bedroom community that built the first atomic bomb, or the infiltration of boredom into even the shipboard recovery of the first lunar astronauts in the Pacific. After absorbing the message of sexual “readiness” in public schools, media millennial progressives now address the crisis of sexual harassment by proposing clearer signals of extra-marital “consent”, all with the inner moral compass of a fencepost.

**CWR:** The first chapters begin with “the tiny whispering sound.” What is this?

**Beaulieu:** The central riddle is how to beckon a sensate world into a reality that includes our birthright—the interior life of the heart in its deepest reaches? Are we really alone or abandoned? The neglected “tiny whispering sound” is heard in the silence noticed by Elijah (or again, Plato) at the head of a cave. It is an Encounter. The opening of informed conscience to make judgments about right conduct is otherwise reduced to the prerogative to simply make private decisions. The true inner voice reminds us of our real selves, as connected with family and other selves, and as embraced by the real and originating

common ground we know as God. Modern-day malaise and addictions—aren't these due less to the lack of therapy than to an even deeper sense of disconnectedness, and our loss of heartfelt belonging?

**CWR:** You rely on paired ideas or contradictions to put your points in clear relief. Can you give us an example?

**Beaulieu:** Our prideful scientific age bows into Galileo's telescope, but then deflects mothers from another real universe visible through the science of ultrasound and fiber optics. Where Galileo saw mountains on the moon, we detect the ridges of real fingerprints on the pre-born child. But as Galileo said to the critics of his time, "nevertheless, it moves." Or again, where President Kennedy put a man on the moon, not much later another president put a female intern on the Oval Office desk, and then gender-theory president was content to put a man in the girls' locker room. This book connects the dots.

**CWR:** You refer to the Big Lie. What is this?

**Beaulieu:** The Big Lie is mandatory amnesia. It is the political art of leaving disconnected the dots of past decades, all clouded in a Potemkin Village of euphemisms: first the removal of moral reference points, next their word-game substitutes for abortion and euthanasia (etc.), and then broadband gender theory—the progressive undermining of our natural and human world. The task now is less about educating than it's about the elementary deprogramming.

When asked what he would do first to save his sinking realm, a Chinese emperor said, "I'd restore the meaning of words." What would move us today to wake from our

insipid mess of cultural pottage and say, "Hey, I've been lied to; I've been cheated. . ." When people get to that point or epiphany, the path ahead is no longer complicated. On a high plane, Etienne Gilson encourages us that "philosophy [in the sense of metaphysics] always buries its undertakers."

**CWR:** You highlight recent and formal rulings of the United States Supreme Court.

**Beaulieu:** The first publicly voted approval of abortion in the world (Washington State, 1970) opened the door to inventive Supreme Court mandates, first endangering all of the unborn, and eventually then corrupting the very idea of marriage and the family ("stereotypical households," Justice Blackman, 1986). For the upcoming generation, defense of man-and-woman marriage is branded as "homophobic" by Supreme Court Justice Kennedy, even as he seems to still concede some philosophical or religious basis for this common sense position. Only weeks before penning his bullying and even fatwa-like majority opinion in *Obergefell v Hodges*, Kennedy postured that "[The traditional] definition [of marriage] has been with us for millennia, and it's very difficult for the court to say, oh, well, we know better." Feint to the right, move to the left...

**CWR:** The book features historical flashbacks to show that what is often accepted as progressive is actually regressive. Is there any example bearing on *Obergefell*?

**Beaulieu:** There's this on the Reign of Terror in revolutionary France: "...If fiends had set themselves to work to discover a mode most effectually destroying whatever is venerable, graceful or permanent in domestic life, and of obtaining at the same

time an assurance that the mischief which it was their object to create should be perpetrated from one generation to another, they could not have invented a more effectual plan than the degradation of marriage into a state of mere occasional cohabitation, or licensed concubinage.” The inventor of the romantic novel, Sir Walter Scott, still detected the non-fiction truth about the late eighteenth century and now the twenty-first.

**CWR:** Give a vignette that illustrates the younger generations adrift in a cultural meltdown not really of their making.

**Beaulieu:** In a matter of a few decades we have mainstreamed the routine saline scalding deaths of unborn children, then physician assisted suicide for the old (legalized as an “exemption” from homicide laws), and now for everyone in between, the flippant redefinition of marriage. The baseline question is whether anything is actually real. If yes, then comes the remembrance of differences as between good and evil, and the demand placed on us from within ourselves to know the difference and to no longer pretend “to be like gods” (Gen 3:5).

So here’s a good example. In a Seattle museum one display is the front-page from when the State of Washington in 1970 approved abortion by popular vote (the first time ever). Next to it is a second display. This one reports that in 1994 a Seattle firm became the manufacturer of ultrasound. The text reports that this University of Washington invention has ‘saved countless lives.’” Shown is an ultrasound image (sonogram) of a real child in the womb, but our value-neutral junior-high-school students breeze past the second display without perceiving any contradiction at all. Only this: “that’s cool, really neat.”

**CWR:** Let’s return to the basic contrast between the “arc of history,” and what you term as the less arbitrary “arc of relations.”

**Beaulieu:** This is the overall perspective—an ambulatory political consensus at odds with the truth and permanence of human nature and the human person. Much of cutting-edge “social evolution,” or being on the so-called right side of history, is a throwback like a wingless Kiwi, but even a flightless bird does not betray itself. Let’s take the national disgrace of slavery and where we stand now: “[documented in the book] Between the War for Independence and the Civil War, church members from the various denominations had remained generally ambiguous and accepted slavery as ‘not intrinsically wrong.’”

Today, it is abortion and suicide pills for the elderly that are gerrymandered into our mindset as “not intrinsically wrong.” Do we notice the parallel between Black sex slaves in the plantations of the Cotton King south, and now campus newspapers advertising fees to be paid to female students who sell out to egg im-plantation and child harvesting?

**CWR:** Over half way through the book you switch from the false messaging of a “culture of death” to a more “human ecology.” What is this?

**Beaulieu:** The term comes from St. Pope John Paul II’s 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus*. He gives us his own paired idea (not equivalency) between the well-vetted natural ecology and the overlooked human ecology. By this he means a proper understanding of the irreducible and “dignity of the transcendent human person” in community, first the forgotten grandeur of the human soul before its Creator, and with

this the family and all the human community.

The two kinds of ecology are distinct and yet connected, but Christian anthropology is more than a footnote to natural science or even cultural anthropology: “[Christ] the same yesterday and today and forever” (cf. Heb 13:8). Morality (the natural law) is not true because religion teaches it, but rather it is taught because it is true as is clearly explained in *Veritatis Splendor*. The natural law is grounded in human nature.

**CWR:** You suggest that those who claim to not be religious are under the influence of “default religions.” What are these?

**Beaulieu:** Those who identify as “None” float atop a sea of their own unquestioned beliefs. I devote the three final chapters to the three substitute anti-religions: Darwinism versus Darwin, the deification of efficiency by Technocracy, and anti-theism accreted to Big Bang physics.

Two years before his death Darwin remained less single track in his thinking: “in my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a God.” And, “I feel most deeply that this whole question of Creation is too profound for human intellect. A dog might as well speculate on the mind of Newton!”

The mixed blessing of morally ambivalent Technocracy is seen in J. Robert Oppenheimer, inventor of the atomic bomb. And in response to the self-sufficient cosmology of Richard Dawkins, we turn to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852). The little orphaned slave child, Topsy, is asked the ultimate question of contingency: “who made you?” Like

Dawkins, Topsy responds: “Nobody as I knows. . . . I ‘spect I (just) grow’d.”

**CWR:** The book has an original way of turning a phrase, but it is also enriched by fitting quotes from many other sources. Are there any surprises here?

**Beaulieu:** I turn to G.K. Chesterton over a dozen times, but there’s another unexpected eye-opener about the novelist Andre Gide. It speaks to our modern-day cult of sexual readiness and experimentation. As a conflicted homosexual, Gide was still opposed to sexual license and favored self control and “sublimating sexual energy into desirable moral and artistic qualities.” But his reviewer then adds that Gide “... emphatically protests that he has not a word to say against marriage and reproduction (but then) suggests that it would be of benefit to an adolescent, before his desires are fixed, to have a love affair with an older man, instead of with a woman. . . the general principle admitted by Gide, elsewhere in his treatise, that sexual practice tends to stabilize in the direction where it has first found satisfaction; to inoculate a youth with homosexual tastes seems an odd way to prepare him for matrimony” (Harold March, *Gide and the Hound of Heaven*, 1952). Admittedly only one anecdote—but what might it suggest about nature-versus-nurture or now about our convenient redefinition of marriage?

**CWR:** Your book is about the loss of our birthright natural law within the flow of external events. What can you add here about where the Church fits in our moment in history?

**Beaulieu:** The first order of business for the Church is to be what it is—the sacramental and mystical Body of Christ...and therefore a real companionship with one another, even

deeper than our solitude. Especially, in this scientific and violent age, the Church must proclaim a higher God who pervades all things and yet is above all things. The Trinitarian Divinity—unity in communion—enters into our midst even as He sustains all of creation in existence. Might we suspect that in a particularly unique way the suffering Christ is the definitive self-disclosure of divine and unconditional self-donation? Can it be really true that “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8) and that in his absolute simplicity God does what he is?

For each personal journey in this Mystery the “law of gradualism” applies—but as “accompaniment,” not the limp handshake of accommodation. In cultural quicksand what is called for is a solid grip toward decision, conversion and redemption. After decades of Beltway solidarity mixed with catechetical infantilism (coloring books and fuzzy banners), the recent accent on subsidiarity, marriage and family restores the path of beauty including the Theology of the Body (a natural law and scriptural context for Pope Paul VI’s earlier *Humanae Vitae*). And regarding both the natural and the human ecologies, leading up to the Second Vatican Council, St. Pope John XXIII said this: “But whatever be the situation, we clearly affirm these problems should be posed and resolved in such a way that man does not have recourse to methods and means contrary to his dignity . . .” (*Mater et Magistra*, 1961).

**CWR:** Extrapolating again beyond the book itself, what do you see on the global stage?

**Beaulieu:** The “Nones” claim to be “spiritual but not religious.” Does this Western ambivalence between materialism and idealism resonate at all with a 1960s remark about historic Islam? In his opinion, Jean Guilton proposed that “Islam has not

wanted to choose between Heaven and Earth. It proposed instead a blending of heaven and earth, sex and mysticism, war and proselytism, conquest and apostolate. In more general terms, Islam proposed a blending of the spiritual and the temporal worlds [...]” (*Great Heresies and Church Councils*, italics added).

On a global scale the New Evangelization involves co-existence with the followers of Islam. But just as Christianity is not to be sanded down into any “broadminded” lowest-common-denominator imposed by radical secularism, so too it is not to be converged with any theological amalgam such as historic Islam. The fourth-century St. Ambrose kept the Church out of the cosmopolitan pantheon of imperial Rome just as he kept Arianism from “interaction” within Milan Cathedral. Instead the inculturation of the future Europe.

**CWR:** Extrapolating again, do you have any thoughts here on what the Church might do to better manage the New Evangelization?

**Beaulieu:** Recent popes have remarked that the Church needs more saints, not managers. We are to be steadfast “in season and out of season” (2 Tim 4:2). The countercultural Benedict Option, but with courageous and precise engagement, requires a reinvigorated educational model with lowered barricades separating the social sciences (and now STEM) from other perspectives. And overall, the times call for something less dated than the open-range autonomy of the “Land O’ Lakes” manifesto. By itself, the so-called law of gradualism has been shown to move randomly in any direction.

What is a well-grounded education under the New Evangelization? Maybe this—that restoring the place of human reason is not Eurocentric, and that objective standards of

truth are universal across all human cultures. So, what do we mean by the “transcendent human person”? At the 2013 World Youth Day, Pope Francis counseled our youth with this: “Yes, I am asking you to rebel against this culture that sees everything as temporary and that ultimately believes you are incapable of responsibility—that believes you are incapable of true love. . . . Have the courage ‘to swim against the tide.’ And also have the courage to be happy.”

**CWR:** From what you’ve seen so far, what are your thoughts about the upcoming Synod focused on youth, and on the March letter delivered from the youth gathering?

**Beaulieu:** Some commentators propose that the failing of past evangelization is found in an approach that relied too much on learning bullet points rather than forming a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And one joke has it that when a priest was challenged by a Protestant on the Catholic “worship” of statues, the priest responded, “we do not worship statues; we worship banners!” But our failing toward our youth was not in mouthed bullet points or even eyeball-candy banners, but overall in an evasive theology and incomplete sacramental preparation.

Especially prior to the new *Catechism* (1994/1997) religion text books were routinely and formally approved if they simply avoided explicit error. But a personal connection with Jesus Christ—and the fact of his Redemptive presence—is undermined just as much by what is simply left out.

In a pocket-size 1985 [Letter to Youth](#) the late St. Pope John Paul II wrote of hope,

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maturity, and responsible freedom toward the truth: “Be not afraid!” His witness is both doctrinal and pastoral, neither without the other. We see where the new Synod engagement with youth today works partly from a questionnaire. Yes, but in the pope’s letter and the Gospel it was the young man who did the deepest questioning: “what more must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17). The Synod on Youth might assist our younger generation (and all generations)—and confront our “throwaway culture”—by recycling this Letter from a young quarry and factory laborer turned priest and then pope, and then modern-day saint. A simple link on diocesan and parish web sites would be an easy win for all.

Regarding the letter, or “compass” delivered by the youth to the Pope on this Palm Sunday, this might call for a response from the primary educators of youth (parents) as well as the Synod fathers. The youth deserve reason for hope, but my initial thought is that a compass usually shows more consistent direction of where to go. As for where we’ve been and where we are, Cardinal Donald Wuerl got the big picture just about right, in Rome when he opened the Year of Faith in October 2012: “This current situation is rooted in the upheavals of the 1970s and 80s, decades in which there was manifest poor catechesis or miscatechesis at so many levels of education . . . It is as if a tsunami of secular influence has swept across the cultural landscape, taking with it such societal markers as marriage, family, the concept of the common good and objective right and wrong.”

<http://www.catholicworldreport.com/2018/03/29/a-generation-abandoned-why-whatever-is-not-enough/>

## What's in a Name?

What do The New York Times, transgender activists, the German bishops, and liturgy have in common?

Let me tell you.

Jennifer Finney Boylan, who writes for The New York Times on “family life, parenting, LGBT issues,” [launched into a screed](#) against Ryan Anderson’s new book, [When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment](#). The column denounced the book as “abundant in junk science,” suggesting it was the result of his “many minutes of meticulous research” and filled with a multitude of “things to break your heart in this book.”

Why pursue a reasoned argument when a few derisive comments and ad hominem attacks will do? Why ask how “scientific” it is to deny that a person is constituted sexually down to every single cell in his body when you have philosophically concluded that “gender” is but a state of mind? Why discuss the ethical nature of administering drugs to suppress puberty, whose effects on developing teenage bodies cannot be known unless you are first willing to experiment on the subject to find out? (Or unless you have decided that, since somatic functioning can be trumped by a state of mind, it doesn’t matter?) Why ask whether allowing a minor to have a mastectomy of healthy breasts and mutilation of healthy genitalia represents good medicine, unless you have first decided that any intervention in the reproductive system is justified by wish fulfillment, not any objective standard of healthy somatic function?

These questions implicate science: the pervasive reality of biology, the notion of objective standards of health and normal integrated somatic function. But we’re not interested in that kind of common-sense science. We want “peer-reviewed” literature, preferably done by the right kind of peer-reviewers. Perhaps a study like “[The Conceptual Penis](#),” which appeared in peer-reviewed Cogent Social Sciences. Oh, right, the author later admitted the article was a [hoax intended to expose](#) the scientific standards of “gender studies,” and that he really didn’t believe the male sex organ is but a “social construct.”

Why bother with all that? Answering those questions in an honest debate might take more than “many minutes” if let out of Pandora’s Box. Better to wrap up your non-argument—like Boylan does—by invoking Robert F. Kennedy, even if you have no evidence that RFK would have subscribed to your position. I hope Boylan, whose other day job is teaching English at Barnard College, excels better at that than at logic.

What I found most offensive about Boylan’s column, however, was the author’s refusal to name Anderson’s book! Boylan simply declares that the book has “a particularly insulting title that I’m not going to put into print here.”

What’s so insulting about Anderson’s frankly clever play on the title of the 1989 film, *When Harry Met Sally*? Transgender activists contend, after all, that there may very well be a “Sally” somehow smothered away inside “Harry,” waiting to be outed. “Harry” indeed may be a false identity, the caterpillar waiting to emerge as a “Sally” butterfly. Like Bruce/Caitlin Jenner. Or maybe James/Jennifer Finney Boylan.

I raise this name issue not just because Boylan did, but also because Darton, Longman, and Todd has just published a new book, [Transfaith](#). The book is a collection of seven experimental liturgies composed by a Church of England priestess and a Metropolitan-Community-Church-retrained-United Reformed Church minister. (Oh, by the way, the dustjacket has a big butterfly on it.)

Among the new rites in this “pastoral resource” is a “[Renaming Ceremony](#).” It is theologically bizarre.

The rite is essentially a parody of Baptism, seizing on the themes of “rebirth” and the tradition of conferring a name in Christian Initiation. Scripture is selectively plucked and employed eisegetically. And, in the end, the objection Ryan Anderson notes in his book is on full display.

Since James can become Jennifer and Bruce Caitlin (though, apparently not Harry Sally), the liturgy assembles the Christian community “to mark a change of name.” We are told there are “echoes in the Bible” for such practice, as when Abram became Abraham, Sarai Sarah, Jacob Israel, and Saul Paul. Presumably, these liturgists did not notice that Abram did not become Sarah nor Jacob Rachel.

The name-change is justified because it “is a recognition of a pre-existing truth that has been obscured.” Transgender ideology puts huge weight upon culture, but in this instance, the “pre-existing truth” also encompasses the very biological reality by which God created this person: “male and female He created them.” Apparently, even God is complicit in the obscuring.

What is particularly interesting in this rite is the use of clothes. The rubric provides that candidates are to be “dressed in gender neutral clothing but bearing symbols of their

natal gender.” Symbols of their “natal gender” will be put under a cloth and something like a baptismal candle is then extinguished. Symbols of their newly assumed “gender” (wherever it happens to be among the fifty shades) will then be taken up and a new candle lit.

As Ryan Anderson asks, if gender is a state of mind independent of a sexual biological foundation, if I am a simmering Sally waiting to burst forth from bodily Harry, then what exactly does it mean to be a “female” or a “male” without a body? How am I male or female independently of a body?

For the social sciences and some philosophies, the answer is an unresolved contradiction: it seems one has to rely on “gender stereotypes” such as “natal” and re-natal clothing to embody (that word, again!) a gendering that has no (necessary) sexual bodily foundation.

For Christian theology (with which, frankly, both the United Reformed and Anglican Churches are having less and less in common) sexual differentiation is precisely a bodily feature. Persons without bodies do not have sex: God is not male or female, nor are angels. But neither is man an angel, a spirit trapped in matter: he is a body-soul unity, which means sex is part of his identity. (Maritain had [once defined](#) the problem of [angelism](#) well.) Human beings, in heaven or hell, will in the end be men and women.

So, if naming/renaming is so essential to creating a “gender” identity unsupported by sex, then what is so “particularly insulting” about Harry becoming Sally?

Which leads me back to the German bishops. The trial balloon floated by Osnabrück bishop Bode and Munich archbishop Marx, to create a “blessing” for

homosexual “marriages,” recognizes the principle of liturgical theology, *lex orandi, lex credendi*—roughly put, how we pray says what we believe. That is why, in the end, attempts to separate pastoral theology from its dogmatic, moral, and liturgical foundations is flawed and dishonest: we do not “accompany” people by a wink and a nod to our theological commitments, only to jettison them when applied in the “existential” situation.

Neither Bode nor Marx can be so theologically naïve as to expect that their ruminations—in a secular newspaper or on state radio—would not likely become a pressure campaign to change Catholic teaching. So, they must understand that their

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<https://www.crisismagazine.com/2018/whats-in-a-name-5#.WsN7RwZWxPk.email>

attempts to create some “pastoral accompaniment” in the form of a “blessing” is intended to incorporate into the Church’s ritual an acknowledgement of behaviors that the Church has previously taught as sinful.

In some ways, it all comes back to nominalism: does a name acknowledge a pre-existing reality or impose my will on “reality”? That’s why control of language is so paramount for the new nominalists and their political correctness: neologisms and the “personal pronoun” wars are just symptoms of the larger phenomenon of what Paul Greenberg once called “vericide”—killing off language is prerequisite to killing off reality. It’s why names matter.

## The Illusion of Independent Thinking

In John G. West's book of a decade ago, *Darwin Day in America*, in which he sketches the influence of Darwinian-inspired materialist thinking on a range of subjects, he has a striking chapter showing how all too many academics, teachers, and their supporters in the media tolerate no questioning about any part of evolutionary theory—even by fellow scholars in biology and related fields and even when it is strictly on the grounds of careful scientific analysis. Instead, they twist their views, claim they are religious fundamentalists, and demonize them. When sociologist Mark Regnerus's careful, thorough study several years ago suggested—despite its being cautious about unmeasured and sweeping conclusions—that children reared in households led by same-sex partners could suffer deleterious effects in adulthood, he was savaged and attempts were made to drive him out of his academic position. Problems in America's minority communities are, as far as mainstream opinion is concerned, due simply to racism and anyone who tries to make a strong public case that the causes are largely to be found within the communities themselves is sure to be pilloried from almost every quarter.

Currently on the American left and among many college students formed by their professors, it has become almost *sine qua non* that America is an almost hopelessly racist, sexist, homophobic society and that it has been and continues to be an oppressive and destructive force in the world. There is hardly any effort at serious analysis of these claims or even an examination of history (for example, a comparison of the racial situation today with what it was in the Jim Crow South)—or for that matter, even an attempt to define the terms that are being tossed about. We've witnessed a recent

walk-out of students at all levels from American school classrooms to push for gun control after the Florida school massacre, but the young people involved and the adults helping—and maybe motivating—they to do this seem closed to considering the socio-moral-cultural causes behind such violence. We hear regularly about “conservative” speakers being shut down on university campuses and how students have to be protected from being exposed to any ideas that they might find offensive.

In case one thinks that closing off one's mind to competing views, avoiding serious examination of questions, and almost reflexively going along with the crowd is exclusively a feature of the left, we find people elsewhere on the politico-economic spectrum who are too ready to be dismissive of views that go against the grain of their own thinking. For example, there are those attached to a certain version of “free market economics” (grounded in classical liberalism) who are quick to say that people who deviate at all from their perspective—say, in questioning outright free trade—are simply naïve about economics (the fervor that some people bring to their preferred economic theories is striking).

Obviously, these are just a few examples—there are literally countless more—of groupthink. That is, going along with conventional thinking or one could say even less flatteringly “following the crowd,” of the routine practice of coming to hard conclusions without even attempting to conduct adequate analysis or research, and of intolerantly dismissing those who challenge—even with tightly reasoned arguments and piles of evidence—the intellectual shibboleths and ideological fashions of the day.

The great irony in all this is that the people—whether they be students, activists of one stripe or another, public figures, or scholars (who have no excuse for their behavior)—who have done nothing but follow along, view themselves as the independent thinkers. The people who aren't with them are the ignorant ones, the unenlightened—the “Neanderthals”—held down by the likes of religion, traditional morality, passé thinking, or whatever. They think that the ruling beliefs of the day are not subject to being challenged. Only those ideas of the past should be questioned because they believe—in truly gnostic fashion—that only modern-day man is truly enlightened (especially those who have the “right” socio-politico-economic understanding). That enlightenment supposedly comes from some vague notion of scientific knowledge uncritically applied to every other area of thought and endeavor. More likely perhaps, they just don't want to be challenged—revealing, of course, a basic insecurity about the validity of their beliefs that they just routinely brush aside. The facts don't make a difference, however, because, after all, we all know that this is what we should believe. Anti-intellectualism abounds—especially among those who are supposed to be the intellectual leaders or leaders-in-information in American society. Why is this the age of followers and conformists, especially for those who should truly be independent thinkers? For students and young people, poor education is a big factor. We are an over-schooled but massively undereducated nation. The consequences of the century-long odyssey of decimating the liberal arts—the tradition of which involved rigorous intellectual formation, equipping students with the proper tools to shape inquiring minds with the aim of knowing truth—are evident for all to see. Most of the campuses are more intolerant and closed to serious academic

debate than they were even in the turbulent 1960s, the era of the “student rebellion.” To a large degree, of course, this is because of the poor tutelage they receive from the scholars like West speaks of who don't know what true scholarship requires. This isn't anything new for these students when they come to college because, as the late John Schmitt wrote as far back as three decades ago, from their earliest years in school students have implicitly conveyed to them the attitude that reality—truth—doesn't exist independently of the mind or, if it does, it cannot be known with certainty anyway (in other words, they are in effect forged in Kantianism). As a result, he said, they are easily swept along by the predominant cultural trends. As Professor David Lowenthal said at the same time, the evisceration of the liberal arts has substituted the predominance of the emotions for the intellect and made young people particularly prone to vague moralistic appeals. So, should we be surprised that many students are reflexively clamoring for gun control after the Florida school massacre?

While the intellectual formation of youth is so weak, let's not forget the lack of general moral formation. That used to be part of what a liberal arts education aided in as well. Mostly, however, the family and the churches conducted moral training. Yet the crisis both institutions have experienced over many years has undermined their effectiveness.

In addition to emotions crowding out reason in people's judgments, let's not ignore the effects of pop psychology—and secular psychology generally. The culture of psychologism has made the emotions the driving force. The line from Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke with their elevating of

the passions over all else has led directly to what we have today.

The hold of ideology is another factor, of course. Although the different versions of liberalism historically haven't had the tight, systematic, consistent set of precepts of, say, orthodox Marxism (even while today's leftism distinctly betrays a vulgarized Marxism, especially cultural Marxism), it now features increasingly rigid and uncompromising positions. As with all ideology, reasoned discourse is displaced by the embracing of unquestioned dogmatism. In politics, one sees this increasingly with the Democratic Party, which is now a party of the hard left that brooks hardly any dissent on the "culture wars" questions on which the balance of Western and American civilization hinge.

As far as the intelligentsia goes, much like upwardly mobile Democratic Party politicians, one can't undersell the factor of pure opportunism. One goes along and conforms his views for the sake of advancing or, especially in the case of most of academia, just getting his foot in the door. Over time, once someone has surrendered his right to think for himself he tends to become a true believer. We also have to remember another thing that makes the intelligentsia think they always have the answers even when they obviously don't. That's the moral failing that they are especially prone to: pride. This pride explains why they are intolerant toward – and want to suppress and even persecute – those who disagree with them.

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<https://www.crisismagazine.com/2018/illusion-independent-thinking#.WsN6RCmVSSw.email>

There is one, perhaps the most basic, factor driving most of this. That's the contemporary exultation of the autonomous self. People think that they are the makers of their own destiny, responsible only to themselves, the sole shapers of the standards they are going to live by. They believe there is no higher moral law, that religion is irrelevant, and they are disdainful of traditional—even age-old—practices and norms. This autonomy is an illusion. In place of true standards, people actually are embracing what amount to the standards of the crowd—all the time believing that they are their own persons. That's simply because man needs some standards and norms to live by. Instead of the true ones, "autonomous man" embraces what prevailing opinion or a certain part of it tells him. He thinks he's being independent because he's going against conventional wisdom and following "enlightened" thinking, but it's really conventional wisdom of a sort that he follows—a "conventional wisdom" which is usually hardly wisdom at all and may even fly in the face of all the obvious realities.

So, the self-proclaimed independent thinkers of today—especially from our "thinking" and influential classes—are anything but that. They are really consummate followers—and heading off the cliff. Unfortunately, because they are so well positioned they aim to take everyone else with them.

## **Irish Policy Aimed at Catholic Schools Raises Fears of Discrimination**

A proposed policy in Ireland that would ban Catholic schools from prioritizing Catholic students on wait lists is being criticized as discriminatory, since it would not apply to other religious schools.

Faith in Our Schools, a newly-formed Irish group, says the proposal “openly discriminates against the conscience and educational rights of Catholic parents” and the “religious, autonomy, and associational rights of Catholic faith schools,” according to the Irish Times.

In Ireland, the Catholic Church runs more than 90 percent of schools, which also receive government funds.

When a religious school is full, the admission process to determine which students will move off the waiting list currently can take religion into account.

However, Richard Bruton, Ireland’s education minister, is expected to soon announce plans to make legal changes to remove what is called the “baptism-barrier.”

Bruton has said that it is “unfair that preference is given by publicly-funded religious schools to children of their own religion who might live some distance away, ahead of children of a different religion or of no religion who live close to the school,” according to the Irish Times.

The proposed policy would only apply to Catholic schools, however. Bruton has said that minority faiths, such as the Church of Ireland, will be able to continue to use religion in the admission process for their schools.

The American Chamber of Commerce Ireland - which represents Facebook, Google, and some 700 other U.S. companies - has advocated in support of the removing the “baptism barrier.”

However, Catholic organizations within Ireland worry that Catholic children and their parents could end up discriminated against under the new proposal, which they also fear could threaten the ethos of schools’ Catholic education.

The Association of Trustees of Catholic Schools, Catholic Primary Schools Management Association, and Association of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland have all spoken out against the proposal.

Ireland’s Constitution protects the right to religious education and also has protections against religious discrimination. It acknowledges the right of parents to “provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children.” Ireland is a largely Catholic country; however, Church leaders have voiced opposition to several prominent legislative proposals in recent years.

In 2015, 62 percent of Irish voters supported referendum to change to constitution to support same-sex marriage.

This May, Ireland’s 8th constitutional amendment, which outlaws abortion except in medical emergencies, could be repealed in a national vote.

Pope Francis announced in March that he will travel to Dublin from Aug. 25-26 for the World Meeting of Families. This year’s theme is “The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World.”

Catholic News Agency

[https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/irish-policy-aimed-at-catholic-schools-raises-fears-of-discrimination-97383#.WsVoIij\\_7f0.email](https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/irish-policy-aimed-at-catholic-schools-raises-fears-of-discrimination-97383#.WsVoIij_7f0.email)

## The Educated Teacher

*Thomism for Teachers: Jacques Maritain's "Education at the Crossroads" (1943)*

"There is but one tragedy, not to be a saint." Famous words these, not written by Maritain himself but by his godfather, and the man who could be credited for saving his life, Leon Bloy. As young college students at the prestigious Sorbonne in Paris, Jacques and his soon-to-be bride Raissa took a vow to commit suicide should they not discover by the end of the year some ultimate reason for living. They found one. It came to them, finally, through the witness of Bloy and the saints and the mystics and the Christ to which Bloy pointed. Over their long, rich lives, Jacques and Raissa would in their turn extend hope to thousands of other seekers. They pointed others to those same saints and mystics which Bloy knew, but above all, to the Church's common teacher, St. Thomas Aquinas.

Born in Paris in 1882 to a lax Protestant family, Jacques entered the Church, together with Raissa, in 1906. After becoming Catholic, he studied biology at Heidelberg, stumbled upon St. Thomas, then went on to become one of the 20th century's greatest philosophers and most ardent proponent of the Thomistic revival. Maritain's chief insights on education are set out in a short book written while he was working at Princeton, in the aftermath of World War Two, *Education at the Crossroads*. Educators will find much to ponder in that work; but the book's chief value, I think, lies in its introduction to the way of life and habit of mind of its author.

As a convert myself, I had not heard of Maritain till later in my college years. As I recall it, I was in my mid-20s and not yet a Catholic, when one Christmas my wife purchased for me *The Very Rich Hours of*

*Jacques Maritain*. This is a biography of sorts, written by another Thomist and disciple of Maritain, and someone I'd later come to know and admire, Ralph McInerny, legendary professor at Notre Dame. In this book it is the ardor of its subject that shines through. The link between prayer and the intellectual vocation attracts. As I discovered then, it was shortly after the First World War that Maritain and his wife established "Study Circles." These were more intellectual retreats than conferences and drew a wide cast of poets, painters, and other intellectuals into the home of the Maritians. Typically Jacques would offer comment upon some Thomistic precept; then would follow a lively discussion that roamed freely between philosophy and art and life, shepherded by the hosts.

Maritain's intellectual appetite astounds. Like St. Thomas, he considered philosophy to be anything that reason can see on its own. And Jacques' reason wished to see much. He wrote important books on politics, art (his *Art and Scholasticism*, for example, inspired the American short story writer Flannery O'Connor), prayer, logic, ethics, and yes, education. Whether the particular proposals of *Education at the Crossroads* happen to convince you, it is the witness of a mind immersed in the spirit of his master, the Angelic Doctor, that commands admiration.

As with all his books, Maritain in *Education at the Crossroads* does not set himself merely to reproduce St. Thomas' "answer" to our problems. His method is far more flexible and dynamic. In its place Maritain aims to see everything rather in the light of Thomas' wisdom. Thus, for instance, in the

contemporary idiom, he reiterates a basic Thomistic counsel: even before we can recover faith, we need to reassert reason: Our crucial need and problem is to rediscover the natural faith of reason in truth. Inasmuch as we are human, we retain this faith in our subconscious instinct.

Or again, see his treatment of technology. Without dismissing the fruits of science, Maritain locates many of the idols of our age, and of our classrooms.

Technology is good, as a means for the human spirit and for human ends. But technocracy, that is to say, technology so understood and worshiped as to exclude any superior wisdom and any other understanding than that of calculable phenomena, leaves in human life nothing but relationships of force, or at best those of pleasure, and necessarily ends up in a philosophy of domination. A technocratic society is but a totalitarian one.

The distinction between, but ultimate unity of, faith and reason; the origin of knowledge in the senses; the composite nature of man as body and spirit; the end of the intellectual life in happiness; the aids of prayer and the sacraments: these are among the perennial truths that Maritain marshals against the errors of the age in an effort to think through the fundamental questions of learning in light of St. Thomas' philosophy.

To "think with the Church" could never mean merely parroting what has passed. Far more, to absorb the spirit of St. Thomas is to advance anew the wisdom of the ages for our own time. That, at least, was how Maritain understood his vocation. This vocation, I might add, came at the summons of Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879). That encyclical laid out the programmatic renewal of intellectual life

that Catholic schools and colleges enjoyed through much of the 20th century, a renewal centered upon the recovery of Thomas. It was in response to this call that Maritain directed his vast energies against the skepticism and despair of modern culture.

Looking on more than half a century, it would be difficult to suggest that despair has lessened. Over roughly the last twenty years the real amount of dollars lavished on a child's public school education in America has doubled. And yet, for all that, the same number of 17-year-old kids are functionally illiterate as twenty years ago (about 13%). Schools need money. But even more, children need hope. Only intellectual discipline, and faith, can make such hope credible. Schools today, by contrast, tend to smother the spirit. Without a supernatural aim, our schools, Maritain observes, often end up "making the youth a victim of stupefying overwork or disintegrating chaotic specialization." Thus do the same grand theses of *Education at the Crossroads* shine out as brilliantly today as they did in 1943 – the dead end of materialism, the bane of early hyper-specialization, the stupidity of studying merely for tests, the wise differentiation of developmental "stages," the counsel that ethics is best absorbed not through propositions but by immersion in the great works of Western literature; and so on.

Since the last Council, Catholic teacher colleges, where they exist at all, have largely sought nourishment from alien sources. We have gathered fruits accordingly. The last 50 years of teacher formation at the hands of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Jean Piaget, John Dewey, and the Marxist pedagogue Paulo Freire have offered our teachers, perhaps, some interesting insights now and again into what it means to teach a human being. But what they do not offer a teacher is the

chance to immerse himself in a Catholic mind.

For those teachers – and their number grows – who wish to form themselves in the mind

Ryan N.S. Topping

<https://journal.newmansociety.org/2018/03/the-educated-teacher/>

and sumptuous imagination of Catholicism, St. Thomas Aquinas offers far healthier fare, to which the very rich hours of Jacques Maritain bear witness.

## Rocky Mountain High

Denver's Our Lady of Lourdes School is showing how faithful, classical education can revitalize a school and parish.

My spirit was quite high when I left Denver recently, and it was not because I was in a plane flying over the snow-capped peaks of the Rockies. It was because I had the pleasure to attend a parish elementary school gala in Denver, Colo. Typically, an elementary school fundraising dinner is wonderful for the school families in that parents get together, the students get to showcase some talents, and some money is raised to help with needed repairs, upgrades or scholarships. What I experienced was a whole new ballgame!

The Our Lady of Lourdes Gala was a big-time affair. The gymnasium was transformed into what looked like a formal ballroom. Tables packed the floor to accommodate over 300 guests, several of whom were in black ties and gowns. Silent auction items lined one wall and a stage centered the other wall, flanked by pictures of the 231 students.

That sounds just fine, but not like that big of a deal. However, it is the back story and the speeches that lifted it to a whole different level than your usual parish school fundraiser. First off, it must be noted that seven years ago, when enrollment reached 90 students, Lourdes was earmarked for closure. Then-Auxiliary Bishop James Conley suggested to Archbishop Charles Chaput that they try one more year with a new young principal at the helm. This young woman had ideas and a passion for education in the fullest sense of the word – even though she was just starting to learn what that meant.

In the intervening years, the implementation of a classical, or Catholic liberal arts curriculum re-made the school. Enrollment has swelled, donations have poured in to support the burgeoning success, and now Our Lady of Lourdes just announced a second campus opening in the Fall of 2018. The support that has enveloped this school many outsiders might think comes simply from the success of the enrollment growth and increasing test scores. In fact, what the community of Denver knows and sees is that it has nothing to do with numbers, but everything to do with a new joy that imbues the student body, and their families – a joy rooted in a deep Christ-centered spirit and a school program rooted in forming the imagination, mind and heart, based on the great stories, questions and ideas of mankind.

The spirit of the students derives from the greatness of those classic poems, epic stories, and discovery of God's creation that they encounter. They are reading heroic epics, not diaries of wimpy kids! Of course they are going to be more excited for what school has to offer, and life, and eternity!

We know that when one part of the body regains health, so improves the rest of the body. So, not surprisingly, the health of the school ended up going hand-in-hand with an increased health of the parish. All systems started to work together. The school supporting the parish. The pastor giving it his all for the school. The liturgy transforming to align more with the school program. Parish programs echoing the school's philosophy. And, consequently, the parish has grown as well. In fact, parish family registration has tripled! The spirit keeps spreading.

Back to the gala. This was such an energetic, powerful, joyful and wonderful evening because of what I described above – the lofty spirit of a community which is so in sync with the Holy Spirit and his workings in the Church for the last two millennia, not just the last two generations. To top it off, Bishop James Conley, now the bishop of the Diocese of Lincoln, Neb., gave the keynote address. He lauded up and down the brilliant application of the time-honored principles of education by Rosemary Vander Weele who has shepherded the school’s transformation, and Fr. Brian Larkin who has been the perfect pastor to make this all happen. Over the past few years, they have formed what Bishop Conley thinks is paramount to any school, a faculty of friends. The Bishop attributes his own conversion to a beautiful mix of the formation of his mind in the classics, the expansion of his imagination in great poetry and art, and the movement of his heart to Christ in the relationships forged in friendships, in a community like Our Lady of Lourdes.

Closing the evening, Fr. Brian summed up really clearly why his school is successful – meaning that it is converting hearts in the midst of joy. He reminded the crowd that as friendships need to be based on the highest and best things, so does the culture in the school. This ultimately derives from the principles of the schools and the families. They are in cooperation to form these young people who will go out into one of the most difficult societies in human history – it is largely a culture that does not believe in right and wrong and does not know what marriage is. How more fundamentally off

Michael van Hecke

<https://journal.newmansociety.org/2018/03/rocky-mountain-high/>

can you get than that? And this is the world their students will meet and need to evangelize. Fr. Brian said, “It warms my heart to look out on my congregation and see the children and to know that they have a place where they are going to be told there IS truth, there IS right and wrong, and there IS a God who loves them.”

Father Brian closed by recalling a quote from St. Augustine that, not surprisingly, gets right to the heart of the matter. Referencing (even in those ancient days) the society’s penchant for caring most about their villa, clothes, parties or jewelry, Augustine chides this attitude as short-sighted, wrong-headed, and ultimately sad. “They are more pained if their villa is poor than if their life is bad, as if man’s greatest good is to possess everything good, except himself!” He repeated this twice, thankfully! It was a little hard to grasp the import of that statement the first time through, but then it really hit home, and cemented the idea of why we do what we do, why we write tuition and donation checks – “the real point of education is to become good.” A faculty of friends wills the good for others, and, in turn, becomes good. In this increasing goodness, the necessary effect is more abundant joy and love for our students, and their families. That is what a school should be about!

All that, and I also had a delightful afternoon with the brand new superintendent of the diocese – a wonderful, Faith-filled man with high ideals. See why I am high on Denver?

## Cardinal Honors Pioneer of Catholic Education in India

Cardinal Oswald Gracias, the Archbishop of Bombay, has instituted the “Msgr. Nereus Rodrigues Educator Award” to honor a longtime advocate for education in the archdiocese.

The announcement was made as the cardinal announced he was giving Rodrigues a lifetime achievement award to honor him as he marked his 95<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The new award named for him will go to the “best educator” in the Archdiocese of Bombay.

Rodrigues also celebrated 60 years in the archdiocese’s education apostolate; the priest still serves as a trustee to St. Andrew’s College in the archdiocese.

He was the college’s founding trustee and first principal and continued as rector until 2011.

“I ‘learnt’ education, under Msgr. Nereus, when I was a headmaster of a middle school and Msgr. Nereus was principal. That was my only experience in Education and I learnt from the best,” Gracias said.

During his time in education ministry, Rodrigues served as the inspector of Catholic Schools. He also headed the Headmasters’ Association, which represented all schools - religious and secular, and was once awarded the State’s Best Teacher Award. Later, he was elected the president of the All-India National Association of Catholic Schools.

The honors have not stopped coming: In 2018, St. Andrew’s College received the Best College Award, handed out by the University of Bombay.

One of Rodrigues’s proudest achievements was the establishment of the Cardinal Poupard Foundation - which established a chair for interreligious and intercultural dialogue at the college.

Poupard is a French cardinal that served as president of the Vatican’s Council for Culture from 1988-2007; the last 18 months of his term, he also headed the Vatican’s Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

Reflection on his time as the inspector of Catholic schools, Rodrigues said it was important work.

“Inspection was a means to evaluate the academic teaching, administration, curriculum, time tables as well as fidelity to the teaching of religion and morals. The inspection report became a very useful document in the hand of the schools inspected, the Inspector, as well as the archbishop,” the priest said.

“There came about a growing sense of accountability in the implementation of the recommendations following the inspection. Regulations were strictly enforced, and the schools functioned at optimum levels,” he continued.

With his knowledge of rules and uncompromising insistence on quality, he helped many an institution to raise their benchmark and go beyond what was expected.

“In Bombay, as it was known in those days, there were many neighborhoods where poorer sections of Catholics lived, and we welcomed their children, who were first-generation learners, into the schools,”

Rodrigues said. “They were treated on par with the students from ‘well-to-do’ families - there was no distinction, and all our students were given the same opportunities.” The priest said the children flourished with both intellectual and religious knowledge, and later could take up jobs and become self-sufficient and empowered.

There are now around 150 institutions of learning at all levels in the archdiocese. Although Catholics make up less than 3 percent of the population, the schools have an important role to play for all the citizens.

Nirmala Carvalho

<https://cruxnow.com/global-church/2018/04/07/cardinal-honors-pioneer-of-catholic-education-in-india/>

Over half of those educated in these institutions are non-Catholic.

“Education, we need to realize, makes a great contribution in sowing hope to lead a new life characterized by all that is beautiful, good, and true,” Rodrigues said. “Through our schools and colleges, Catholic education is responsible for positively changing and transforming the face of society.”

When asked about his life, however, the 95-year-old merely offers a shy smile. “We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty,” he said.

## Classical Education: A Direct Line to Truth

At St. Ambrose Academy in Madison, Wisc., classical education is grounded in the notion that training in the Trivium – grammar, logic, and rhetoric – must precede specialized study in a particular field.

At St. Ambrose Academy in Madison, Wisc., classical education is grounded in the notion that training in the Trivium – grammar, logic, and rhetoric – must precede specialized study in a particular field. The goal is for students to master the use of what Dorothy Sayers referred to as “[The Lost Tools of Learning](#),” so that they can be self-learners for the rest of their lives. These three “skill sets” are also commonly referred to as “stages,” because attention to the intellectual development of children shows that they pass through periods of growth that are more conducive to training in the different tools of the Trivium. Though we offer the same subjects, what truly sets a classical school apart is this commitment to training in the Trivium.

### *Grammar Stage*

The grammar stage is geared toward building up a repository of knowledge from which a person can draw throughout their lives. In order to increase our intellectual inventory, we need to be adept at certain skills – observation, memorization, sequencing, categorization, and more. In early childhood, students are particularly adept at picking up these skills, as the world is full of wonder (observation) and their brains memorize new things with voracity. We focus on training in these skills and helping young children to build up a rich intellectual treasury from which to draw. In this stage, they learn the building blocks of every discipline – math facts, parts of speech, scientific terms, geography,

historical dates, etc. Younger students are given the opportunity to speak their minds and to think creatively, but the focus of their training is on building up a treasury of content and experience, learning the methods by which they can make knowledge their own.

### *Logic Stage (Dialectic)*

As students get older, they are less content with knowing that something is true and start to wonder why it is true. They begin to desire an explanation for things. Here they are trained in the skills of logic and taught how to unpack and analyze difficult material, searching for coherence and consistency. They are trained in the skills of analysis – paraphrase, summary, outlining, prioritizing, cause and effect, the structure of arguments and theorems. So many times, when teaching college courses, I’ve faced this heart-breaking situation. Having dutifully read an assigned passage, I ask the students what they thought of it, to which they reply, “I don’t know. I didn’t understand it.” This is not because the material was beyond their ability; it is because they lack the basic tools to unpack the logic of a text and discern its meaning. At St. Ambrose, we train our students to do just that, without leaving behind the goals of the grammar stage by building up their inventory with the classic and enduring texts of each age.

### *Rhetoric Stage*

In the rhetoric stage, we turn more to the expression of ideas. Older students more naturally form their own opinions about what they are reading, but they need training in how to express these opinions in a principled, eloquent, and persuasive

fashion. Again, without leaving behind the skills of the grammar or the logic stage, we focus on training in the five canons of rhetoric – invention, arrangement, elocution, memory, and delivery. Students are taught in seminar style classrooms, reading primary texts, and discussing content Socratically with their instructor or through dialogue and debate with their peers. They are then given ample opportunity for composition – both in paper and essay exam form – with dedicated feedback from their instructors.

In a college sophomore theology class, having studied Bonhoeffer’s plot to assassinate Hitler, I asked on a test, “What is your opinion of Bonhoeffer’s plan?” A student came up to my desk, pointed to the question, and said, “I can’t answer this. You haven’t told us yet.” St. Ambrose students are given ample opportunity to form sound

Dr. Constance Neilsen

<https://journal.newmansociety.org/2018/04/classical-education-direct-line-truth/>

opinions (that is, rooted in evidence and principles), as well as the training and experience to express them with elegance.

This is what it means to receive a “liberal education.” Such an education makes the mind “free” – free from the need always to be told what to think, free from the tyranny of propaganda and spin, free from the pressures of an ever-changing tide of public opinion, free to pursue and choose the true, the beautiful, the good, and the one.

In the Catholic context of St. Ambrose Academy, students are also free to pursue all truth as proceeding from and leading ultimately to Jesus Christ – to vivify their relationship with God, and to strengthen their commitment to serving the common good.

## Film and Evangelization — How Bishop Barron Inspired High School Seniors

Each year at Bishop Sullivan Catholic High School, students are required to complete a “senior evangelization project” for their final year’s theology class.

This year, the students have been assigned by their teacher, John Goerke, with tackling their class project through a particular medium: film.

Each student has been charged with researching, writing, shooting, and editing their own film about Catholicism, inspired by Bishop Robert Barron’s own video series, “Catholicism: Pivotal Players”.

Because the project was inspired by Bishop Barron himself, the students and Goerke recently asked the Los Angeles auxiliary bishop in a video letter on Twitter to judge the final five nominees and choose the winner of what the school is calling the “Bishop Barron Video Award.” He agreed.

“How could I say no?” Barron told CNA.

Barron remarked that he was notified late Thursday night of the video letter by a friend of his. After watching it, he said he was “very touched and moved” by the whole story. He later replied to the Tweet, saying “Wow, this made my day!”

“My own thinking has kind of impacted these kids and my own approach to evangelization has influenced them, so I was very moved by it and was very grateful to their teacher,” Barron noted.

The seniors at Bishop Sullivan produced 34 videos in total and put in more than 300 hours of combined work into the making of

the films. Goerke said he would view all of the films, and narrow down the finalist list to five nominees. These final films will be reviewed by Bishop Barron.

As Barron watches the videos, he said he would be looking for a number of different qualities in order to determine the winner.

“I suppose I am looking for a combination of content and style. I’d also like it to be substantive, because that has been a big part of my work – I don’t want evangelization to just be superficial and flashy,” he said.

He said the students should not have a problem incorporating substance into their videos, since they have been learning from great minds, such as G.K. Chesterton, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Bl. John Henry Newman.

Barron also noted that he would be looking for films which are “visually engaging” and “artistically done, with a little touch of creativity and maybe a little bit of humor.”

Among the film topics submitted by the students range from the resurgence of the Tridentine Mass among young Catholics to the Sisters of Life out of the Archdiocese of New York.

The videos will be recognized at the school’s Senior Awards Ceremony and baccalaureate Mass.

Bishop Sullivan Catholic High School in Virginia Beach, Va., more than 100 miles southeast of Richmond, has educational roots dating back to 1848 and was founded as a college preparatory school with the aim of nurturing the intellect, character, and Christian values.

CNA Daily News Briefs

<http://www.catholicworldreport.com/2018/04/14/film-and-evangelization-how-bishop-barron-inspired-high-school-seniors/>

## The Lion, the Witch, and the Educational Value of C.S. Lewis

*Joseph Pearce writes: This essay by high school sophomore, Sophie Stachurski, was entered for the Tolkien and Lewis Essay Contest which I direct in partnership with Homeschool Connections and Holy Apostles College. Although it wasn't the overall winner, it is very well-written and perceptive and is on an education-related topic. For this reason, we're publishing it here (Ed. the Journal of the Cardinal Newman Society), not merely for the content of the essay itself but also as an illustration of the quality of Catholic education experienced by Miss Stachurski.*

My first encounter with C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* came when I was 7 years old. I ventured into the wardrobe with the Pevensie siblings in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. My second-grade teacher would read a chapter aloud to the class every day after recess, with the hope of encouraging us to continue reading outside of the classroom. Admittedly, I never actually continued the series past this book (I had been occupied by my recent discovery of Harry Potter) and didn't have any outstanding motivation to return to Lewis' famed world. This changed, however, when I entered high school. The books were once again being showcased by my teachers, but now for much different reasons. I quickly learned C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* can be utilized as a tool beneficial in teaching religion to high schoolers.

Lewis was well-known for inserting theological themes into his books, reflective of his own Christian beliefs and values. *The Chronicles of Narnia* is no exception. In a letter to a young fan, Lewis wrote the following:

The whole Narnian story is about Christ. That is to say, I asked myself, 'Supposing that there really was a world like Narnia and supposing it had (like our world) gone wrong and supposing Christ wanted to go into that world and save it (as He did ours) what might have happened?

The series has been dissected and scoured by many in search for all of the many allegories of Christianity. Many of the characters and elements of the plot of *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* were deliberately crafted and written in a way to parallel the life of Jesus Christ and his followers, thus making it the perfect introduction to the basic teachings of Christianity for young children. As a teenager, I feel Lewis' work has allowed for me to grasp the depth behind Jesus' mission of salvation and its deeply personal nature.

The true meaning behind Lewis' books was initially introduced to me in my religion class during freshman year in a brief unit dedicated to exploring "Christ-Figures on Screen." Lewis' leonine character, Aslan, had been brought up as one of the first examples, and we briefly discussed his Resurrection and his role as Narnia's savior. This came as a slight shock to me. I previously assumed that Aslan was simply meant to be the series' token hero, not a major piece of a convoluted allegory. Later, each of the individual Pevensie siblings was looked at as metaphors for the various types of Christians. Although these details are perhaps obvious to readers familiar with Lewis' strong belief, it certainly inspired in me a new and fleeting appreciation of the thought that went behind Lewis' work. After the unit passed, Narnia once again fled from my mind until the following school year. A few weeks into sophomore year, my religion teacher instructed us to begin

reading *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Initially, I thought that we would be taking a respite from the textbook's material, which was not the case. In contrast, we would be reading the book alongside the textbook. My teacher had previously made the claim that he could teach all the textbook's contents using *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. To my surprise, this claim would hold true.

The first religious symbol within the novel we discussed was the temptation of Edmund with Turkish Delight, the latter being used as a symbol of sin. Prior to reading the chapter in which Edmund first encounters the White Witch, we learned about the capital sins, more popularly known as the "seven deadly sins." In the case of Edmund, his decision to trust the villainous White Witch simply because of her promise of endless Turkish Delight is his passing through the gateway to further "sins." Therefore, fueled by greed, gluttony, and a heavy dose of middle-child syndrome, Edmund allies himself with the White Witch, effectively betraying his siblings. Here, Lewis illustrates a prime example of the negative examples of giving into temptations, albeit the consequences of Edmund's actions are slightly more dramatic. In this context, the White Witch acts as a simplified devil. She lures Edmund into her domain with false promises and dishonesty and opens the path for further disobedience.

It is easy to antagonize Edmund because of his poor choices, but to do that would be hypocritical. Out of all the Pevensie siblings, Edmund is the one whom all readers can identify with. Whereas the others are one-dimensionally good, Edmund struggles to follow the path of goodness. He makes bad decisions and allows himself to be influenced by people he shouldn't, but so

does the rest of humanity. Like Edmund, we can still find redemption. Aslan's personal pardon of Edmund's misdeeds serves as a much-needed reminder that Christ died for every individual's sins. Rather than looking at Edmund as the weakest of the siblings, my teacher invited us to explore how we all have a little bit of "Edmund" in us.

Additionally, this scene can be used as a contrast to the Gospel story where Jesus resists the three temptations of the Devil in the desert. Whereas Christ succeeded, Edmund and the rest of us often fail. Still, even if we do succumb to the initial temptation of sin, we are not condemned for the rest of our lives. Soon after Edmund realizes he has been tricked by the White Witch, he desires to return to Aslan and his siblings. In order for him to do this, Aslan must sacrifice himself in Edmund's place as is required by Narnia's laws of Deep Magic. These details emphasize Aslan's similarities to Christ as both Jesus and as the Passover sacrificial lamb. One of Christianity's central doctrines, the Paschal Mystery, states that God has redeemed all people from sin and death through Jesus Christ's Suffering, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. Lewis draws additional parallels to Jesus' Paschal Mystery with the events preceding and following Aslan's Death. For instance, in a unit dedicated to the Crucifixion of Jesus, my textbook goes through a series of events that took place prior to Jesus' death, some of which include the Agony in the Garden, Jesus' Condemnation by Pontius Pilate, and Simon of Cyrene's assistance of Christ with the cross. As expected, there is a correlating scene within *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* for each of these occurrences. Together as a class, my peers and I went through each event and searched for connecting scenes in the book. Through collaboration, we were able to compile a fairly lengthy list. For example, the scene

where Aslan walks off into the woods before he is killed by the White Witch closely matches that of the Agony of the Garden. What's more, in a parallel to Simon of Cyrene, he is then later joined by Lucy and Susan Pevensie, who walk with him as he approaches the Stone Table, the Narnian equivalent of Jesus' cross. There are even more parallels contained in Aslan's actual death. While on the Stone Table, Aslan is spat at and mocked by the White Witch's followers, much like Jesus was by his opponents while he appeared before Pontius Pilate. Also, a muzzle is placed on Aslan in a fashion similar to that of Jesus' crown of thorns.

When compared side-by-side, the separate contents accentuate and play off of each other. Incorporating *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* into lessons about Christ adds a new perspective to the Gospel stories frequently taught in a repetitive manner. Aslan's quest to free all Narnians from the White Witch's vicious reign reminds readers just how important Jesus' act of salvation is. Simply listing out the sequence of events of the Resurrection does not have the same impact as presenting it alongside a triumphant tale of four siblings and a talking, Christ-like lion. By integrating C.S. Lewis into my religion class, my teacher has effectively created a more engaging way to teach the central messages of Catholicism

The journey of searching for religious symbols within *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* has encouraged me and my classmates to further develop our critical reading skills and imagination. Even though Lewis includes more obvious elements that draw similarities between his series and Biblical themes, some require a more in-depth familiarity with the Gospel. Therefore, the background knowledge provided within many school-grade religion textbooks can

provide students assistance in analyzing the symbols and metaphors for Christianity found within the novel's text. Likewise, it is also necessary to employ one's imagination when faced with a task such as this. Just as the Narnia series was born from Lewis' imagination, we too must use ours when interpreting his works. All in all, identifying and studying the religious aspects found within the text of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* instills students with valuable critical reading experiences.

In addition to learning the content within the textbooks, prayer and meditation also comprise a major aspect of my religion class. This too has also been influenced by C.S. Lewis and was accomplished most notably through a project in which we were instructed to design our own Narnia character. Alongside a visual representation of the character, we had to submit answers to questions about our characters. The first required an imagined scene between the original character and Aslan. Previously, we had done a guided meditation in which we simulated a meeting with Christ. I found that what I had written in the project closely matched the experience I had during that meditation. To elaborate, my character, a siren named Esther, longed to join Aslan's cause, but felt she couldn't for a variety of reasons. In my meditation, I confronted the excuses I created for myself concerning my discipleship.

The inclusion of C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* into my religion class' curriculum proved to have a positive impact on both myself and the class a whole. The characters and events found in Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* serve as purposeful references to Christianity. These parallels have provided me with a strong reinforcement of the values taught by Christianity such as the personal relationship

between us and God. By inserting the ideas of the Paschal Mystery into a fictional world, Lewis successfully highlights the

importance of Catholic doctrine in an innovative and effective way.

Sophie Stachurski

<https://journal.newmansociety.org/2018/04/lion-witch-educational-value-c-s-lewis/>

## ‘Beauty is for Everyone’

Serving pre-kindergarten through eighth grade, St. Jerome Academy is the parish school of the nearby St. Jerome Catholic Church, located in Hyattsville, Md. Through a classical curriculum, the academy offers students a window into a world of beauty. A graduate of St. Jerome can analyze poetic meter and defend an original thesis statement with reasons, details, and examples in grammatically accurate prose. Students calculate slope, represent quadratic equations, and sing the Mass parts in Latin. They study Latin, hold avid discussions, keep nature journals, memorize poetry, and perform plays.

Given the school’s important work, it becomes apparent what was at stake when the school almost closed eight years ago. However, it would be misleading to suppose that the school was offering a classical education in those days. In fact, the eminent end of the school in 2009 was the impetus for considering that approach.

### *Do we want our school?*

Fr. James Stack had served as pastor of the parish since 1998. School Principal Mary Pat Donoghue was a child of the parish. She had grown up at St. Jerome, attended its school as a child, and begun teaching there in 1991. She went on to serve as vice-principal between 2001 and 2008.

Donoghue knew first-hand how student enrollment had declined by half since 2001. She had seen the resulting dramatic shift in the school’s culture and morale. Its Catholic identity was waning, its tests scores were falling, and parental involvement was dropping. Fewer parish families were enrolling their children in the school, and those mainly for the sake of its proximity to

major D.C. commuter routes. The school deficit was about \$170,000.

In August 2009, Donoghue became principal. A few months later, she and Fr. Stack were asked to attend an afternoon meeting at the pastoral center for the Archdiocese of Washington. Donoghue and Fr. Stack had a good guess about the meeting’s agenda.

The superintendent of education, the chief financial officer, and others went over the financial data. They explained that St. Jerome’s school had run out of money and run out of options. From where she sat at the conference table in the pastoral center, Donoghue could see out the windows. She remembers watching the trees whipped about by the wind. Her heart was racing; she could feel it beating in her ears while other sounds were strangely muffled. Over and over she thought, “I won’t let this close. This can’t close. This can’t close.”

The conclusion of the meeting was that St. Jerome school leaders needed to meet with the community and determine if there was any will to keep the school open. If so, St. Jerome needed to develop a strategic plan within the next few months or choose the alternative of merging with another school or closing its doors. Furthermore, to register students for the coming school year, St. Jerome would need to present its plan as well as close its deficit of \$170,000 within the next three months. Adding a melancholy note, the community meetings were scheduled for November 2, the Day of the Dead, All Souls Day. It was grey and overcast when school faculty and staff gathered in the church with Donoghue and Fr. Stack for their 3:30 p.m. presentation on the state of the school. At

6:00 p.m., Donoghue and Fr. Stack repeated the presentation to the parish council, finance council, and school advisory board. And at 7:30 p.m., teachers and school staff sat down in the front pews of the church, and the church filled with school and parish families. Now thoroughly exhausted, Donoghue and Fr. Stack began presenting for the third time. With some surprise, Donoghue noticed that most of the attendees were not school families but other parishioners.

Among those parishioners were Chris Currie and Dr. Michael Hanby. Currie and his family joined the parish in 1997; he now serves as director of advancement for St. Jerome. Dr. Hanby and his family joined the parish in 2007, after he took a teaching position at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family. Both the Currie and Hanby families were among the parishioners who had opted not to enroll their children at St. Jerome. Instead, they were educating their children classically, at home and through cooperatives. In fact, Hanby had written an essay on classical education in fall 2009, to help the Curries with managing their small classical cooperative called Crittenden Academy.

In the church of St. Jerome, a rich dark reredos of wood frames the crucifix and tabernacle. On an evening, it is dim and shadowy in the back of that massive church. Here in the back section of pews, both Currie and Hanby were sitting, on the right “St. Joseph” side of the church.

The Curries were invested in nurturing Hyattsville’s neighborhoods and in building Catholic community. They were concerned about losing the vitality of having a parish school. Nothing was to be gained by trading

all that possibility for a big empty building on campus.

Hanby was sitting in a pew with his arms folded, feeling his blood pressure rise. He was troubled about the state of education in general. In his prior position as associate director of Baylor University’s Institute for Faith and Learning, Hanby had already been considering problems in education. As a teacher and father, he noticed how many students lack a culture; they are heirs to no historical, artistic, literary, philosophical, or theological tradition. He has seen abysmal deficits in writing skills. Most concerning is how listless many students seem about learning. According to Hanby, education has become merely a means. Securing the most expeditious means is all the focus, whether through resumé building, cramming for tests, or simply cheating. Hanby brought these concerns to the parish meeting. He was also concerned about a disconnect between the school, the parish, and many parish families concerned for their children’s education. The closure of the school would end any possibility for integrating school and parish life.

The meeting with school and parish families was conducted along the lines of a town hall meeting. Many attending that evening meeting on November 2 were completely blind-sided by the news. Donoghue knew the financial problems were part of larger issues connected to student enrollment, school culture, and Catholic identity. As she put it, “No number of bake-sales was going to fix the problem.” Tensions rose as people took the microphone to ask questions or voice suggestions: Why not ask the Domino’s Pizza guy for money? Why not lay off some teachers? Seeing the teachers in the front pew, Currie winced at that latter suggestion. Everybody was getting uncomfortable.

Handouts were provided; one carried the school's mission statement. Hanby pulled this out first, reading through it and thinking, "How does this mission statement differ in any significant way from the education that parents can get for free at their public school? Let's imagine what a really Catholic school would look like." Clenching that paper in his fist, Hanby went home that night and emailed Donoghue: "I really want this school to survive, but I'm not sure it deserves to. If you want to do something bold here, I'd love to help."

The superintendent of education for the Archdiocese of Washington, Dr. Patricia Weitzel-O'Neill, was also present at the meeting. Afterward she stood in the church's center aisle and spoke with a line of parishioners. Several approached her individually about the possibility of a classical education at St. Jerome. She would later contact Donoghue and advise her to consider a classical approach. Donoghue was somewhat familiar with the principles of classical education, but knew she would need help. With clear support from the parish, Donoghue and Fr. Stack set out to renew St. Jerome's school.

### *Drafting a new plan*

Shortly after meeting with the archdiocese, Donoghue began forming a committee to steer the school's future. The committee grew organically. Some people like Hanby simply contacted Donoghue. Other contacts were made over conversations at post-Sunday Mass coffee and donuts. In the end, the committee had eight members, led by parishioner Dr. Jared Ortiz, who was completing his dissertation on Augustine's Confessions at The Catholic University of America. They met every week between December and March to draft a new educational plan for St. Jerome. As

spring approached, Hanby and Ortiz "pulled several all-nighters" to finish the plan, sometimes a few nights in a row.

Fr. Stack's leadership was key during this time. "Fr. Stack: I will love that man forever," said Hanby. "He presided over a couple miracles. None of this would have happened without his humility. He is not threatened by things that are beautiful and excellent. He wanted the best for his people. And we didn't have much to work with other than elbow grease."

Donoghue and Fr. Stack found a wonderful supporter in Dr. Weitzel-O'Neill, who worked to relieve St. Jerome of meeting the archdiocesan educational standards. Instead, St. Jerome was asked only to employ some standardized assessments as it adopted a classical curriculum for the school's new educational charter. Meanwhile, Donoghue and Fr. Stack closed a major portion of the financial deficit. They conducted a direct appeal and several fundraisers, while Fr. Stack reached out to friends and contacts made over the course of his priesthood. By January, most of the needed money was donated or pledged.

The transition was a source of tension, the ending of relationships, and several resignations. Before the start of the new school year for 2010-2011, Donoghue would make seven new hires. Teacher training could not begin until the very end of summer. Donoghue relied on prayer "every single day" to sustain her during this time: "It was really an invitation to walk by faith and not by sight. There were many times where I worried that we wouldn't be able to do this. I relied on prayer constantly for this." She often prayed at her desk. She also had a key to the church, and there was many a time Donoghue "zoomed" across the street

to sit in a quiet pew and pray before the Blessed Sacrament.

*St. Jerome Today*

With the opening of the school year in 2010-2011, St. Jerome began offering a classical education in every grade. Of area schools facing the same dilemma in 2009, St. Jerome is the only school which did not close or merge with another school. In fact, since the change, St. Jerome student enrollment has grown every year.

Even more remarkably, without enormous financial resources, the school continues to offer its outstanding education to a diversified student body, about 10 percent Hispanic, 30-40 percent African-American, 30-40 percent White, and around 10 percent multi-racial. According to Donoghue, students also come from widely varied

Gwen Adams

<https://journal.newmansociety.org/2018/04/beauty-is-for-everyone/>

backgrounds in terms of single-parent households and socio-economic status. According to Hanby, “Beauty is for everyone. Truth is for everyone. And goodness is for everyone. There is no reason why people from all walks of life shouldn’t benefit from a really beautiful and true and profound education. For everyone, but especially those who come from more difficult circumstances, it can be absolutely life-changing.”

Several schools around the country have adopted St. Jerome’s educational plan. St. Jerome is now in the process of revising the plan to make it even more adaptable for other schools. Now as director of school services for the Institute for Catholic Liberal Education, Donoghue helps principals, teachers, and parents form themselves in the classical tradition, equipping them to found or renew schools, the better to serve their families, parishes, and communities.

## Catholic Education and the Gift of Students with Special Needs

Parents welcome their children as gifts, with all the joys and challenges that come with parenting. As Pope Francis writes, “the family is the setting in which a new life is not only born but also welcomed as a gift of God. Each new life allows us to appreciate the utterly gratuitous dimension of love, which never ceases to amaze us. It is the beauty of being loved first: children are loved even before they arrive. Here we see a reflection of the primacy of the love of God, who always takes the initiative, for children are loved before having done anything to deserve it” (*Amoris Laetitia*, 166).

Parents of children with special needs know their children to be gifts of God, with all the joys and challenges of parenting and educating children with disabilities. In a heartbeat, these parents will speak of their children as life-changing gifts. For their hearts beat with the love of God for the precious children entrusted to their care.

In Catholic schools across the Archdiocese of Washington children with special needs find a place of welcome, nurture, and belonging where they come to know they are respected and believed in. As the archdiocese’s Secretary for Education, finding resources to include and educate children with special needs in Catholic schools is a priority I support and encourage. For the ways in which Catholic schools welcome, serve, and develop the potential of children with disabilities reflects what is distinctively Catholic about a Catholic education.

Last week I had the privilege of speaking with four young adults with disabilities – Caroline Bodley, Lucy Collins, Madeline Guay, and Ben Stevick – who were among the first to benefit from a Catholic education

in elementary and high schools across this metropolitan area. At the annual spring gala of the Catholic Coalition for Special Education, these young adults served as gala co-chairs. As children with disabilities, they were transformed into confident young adults through their experience of finding a Catholic school they called home.

I was struck by their quiet self-assurance as they radiated an innocent joy that comes from being loved unconditionally. Catholic school teachers, administrators and classmates had given them the priceless gift of being included, respected, and valued as members of a Catholic school community. A Catholic education had clearly made a tremendous difference in their life’s journey and will continue to do so for generations of other students with disabilities.

With a soft confidence in her voice, Caroline spoke of her participation in the Special Olympics as a member of her high school swim team at Seton Keough High School in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Maddie and Lucy spoke of their time as students at the Academy of the Holy Cross in Kensington, Maryland. Among their favorite school memories were the friendships they formed while participating in gym or in jazz, hip-hop and tap-dancing contests. English was Maddie and Lucy’s favorite subject, while Ben favored math. “My Catholic school teachers,” said Maddie, “inspired me to be the best I can be!”

Then without hesitation, these young adults began to tell me about the spiritual benefits of their Catholic education. Their witness to faith was truly inspiring as it confirmed the lifelong impact of faith formation that Catholic schools daily offer to students across this archdiocese. “Catholic education

brought me closer to God,” said Maddie with an innocent smile, “and when we are close to God we are happy...and God is happy, too!”

Dr. Maggie Hubbard, the Director of Special Education in the Catholic Schools Office of the Archdiocese of Washington, works closely with the Catholic Coalition for Special Education (CCSE) to ensure that Catholic schools in this archdiocese have the needed resources to educate children with disabilities. The CCSE supports Catholic schools who seek to expand their outreach and inclusion programs for special needs students, teacher coaching and professional development, and spiritual and practical support to families raising children with disabilities.

Francesca Pellegrino, president and founder of the Catholic Coalition for Special Education, has dedicated herself to creating and nurturing a close knit, caring community of parents, families and benefactors who generously support the organization’s initiatives. In her opening remarks at the CCSE’s Spring Gala, she highlighted the formative impact of a Catholic education on the lives of young adults when she said, “The Catholic schools they attended instilled in them the confidence to believe in themselves. And they shattered all expectations when people looked beyond their disability and recognized their gifts and abilities and gave them the opportunities to learn, grow and reach their potential. That was something that just a decade or so earlier was considered simply impossible. Their wonderful teachers believed they would be successful and watched with joy as they flourished.”

Mary Brogan, vice president of CCSE, echoed a similar commitment to opening Catholic school doors to students with

disabilities. Her daughter, Theresa, was welcomed into their parish school at St. John the Evangelist, Silver Spring, from her pre-school years and is now a senior at the Academy of the Holy Cross. Mary noted the “unspecified fear of school administrators that they don’t have resources and the capacity to welcome and educate children with disabilities.” Benefactors and supporters of CCSE work hard to provide financial and training resources to pastors, principals, and teachers so that their hearts, minds, and educational institutions are open to children with special needs.

As the CCSE Gala began, I caught up with Allis Guay, mother of Maddie, who said her daughter’s experience at the Academy of the Holy Cross was positive and life-changing, both academically and spiritually. Finding a Catholic school that would accept Maddie was a challenging journey for her and her husband Bernie, but there was a certain mystery to how things were resolved when they relied on the Holy Spirit. “Maddie is a gift to us,” she said with tearful joy, “and we are so grateful for her Catholic education. Her teachers helped her go out of herself in service and love of others.”

With the dedication of parents and the help of organizations like CCSE, Catholic schools in this archdiocese will find the support and resources needed so students with and without disabilities can learn together and grow to their full human and spiritual potential. In this way, Catholic schools fulfill their distinct mission where students encounter Jesus through the experience of love, unity, respect and diversity.

Faith in Jesus Christ is the core of every Catholic school community. Believing that students with special needs have a place at the table of Catholic education extends the

love of God in love of neighbor. For as the gala's co-chairs and Catholic school alumni Caroline, Lucy, Maddie, Ben, and Scotty Lesmes and Christina Staros proudly told

their parents, teachers, benefactors and friends, "because you believed in me, I believed in me."

Jem Sullivan

<http://www.cathstan.org/Content/News/Schools/Article/Catholic-education-and-the-gift-of-students-with-special-needs/2/21/8390>

## Secular Superficiality versus the Rootedness of Culture

The other day we Americans were informed by National Public Radio that it was Easter Sunday, when Christians celebrate the fact that Jesus did not have to go to hell or purgatory, but rose straight into heaven. It is like saying that Christopher was named Columbus after the capital of Oklahoma, or that Joan of Arc sailed with Noah across the English Channel to fight against the Saxons.

This is what you get for your tax dollars. You also get schools in which nobody learns anything about Scripture or about the civilization built upon it, because that would involve what is called, as if it were the most shocking of indelicacies, “religion,” and, as we know, because National Public Radio would tell us, religion has no place in our public schools.

Now, nobody will say openly that Chaucer, Dante, Giotto, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Rembrandt, Milton, Bach, Handel, Dickens, T. S. Eliot, Hawthorne, Melville, Tennyson, Browning, and basically everyone else who breathed the air of western civilization and who was not a committed atheist have no place in our public schools. So you may hear that we should of course allow the study of Dante as a poet, but not as specifically a religious poet, or of Bach as a composer, but not specifically as a religious composer. That is like saying that it is all right to study the moon, so long as you keep geology and astronomy out of it, or that it is all right to play Bach’s *Jesu, Meine Freude*, so long as you don’t sing the words, or you may sing the words, so long as you keep to the German and nobody translates them for you.

Well, the obvious result of such thinking is that Bach and the rest are sent to the principle and then dismissed from school. I

have seen it from my college freshmen over the last thirty-odd years. If you have to tiptoe through a mine-field to read the gospel-saturated novels of Dickens, you’ll find it a relief not to bother to teach Dickens at all. Since so much of the greatest English poetry written before 1900, and a good deal of it afterwards as well, is religious in its soul – *The Canterbury Tales*, *The Faerie Queene*, *Paradise Lost*, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, *The Idylls of the King*, *The Waste Land*, *Four Quartets* – and since schoolteachers and even college English professors don’t know a lot about it, it’s easy to just shrug it away. Don’t read *In Memoriam*. Read some miserable young adult fiction instead.

We are going to see, then, as a rule and not the exception, people of great native intelligence who know absolutely nothing about the Christian faith. Lilies of the field, the prodigal son, death shall have no dominion, the valley of the shadow of death, covering a multitude of sins, and the light shines in the darkness, a lamp unto my feet, I AM WHO AM – they will recognize none of these. A third walking beside us, blood and water flowing from his side, the Damascus road, the three-time crowing of the cock, chariots of fire, the fleshpots of Egypt, thirty pieces of silver, the stone which the builders rejected – none of these will move their hearts. They erect no statues of beautiful Apollo or Aphrodite. They are not pagans, ready for the revelation of the Unknown God. They are sub-pagan, sub-cultural. It is not that they remember Jupiter Best and Greatest rather than Jesus, the Crucified. They have no memory at all. They have not put down roots in the wrong place. They have no roots. They are spiritual tumbleweeds in a dust bowl of oblivion.

In this context, then, we ought to ask of our Catholic schools and colleges, “What are you going to do about it?” I will tell you what not to do. You do not put a rootless man on a cruise ship and send him to various ports of call across the world, so that he may pick up “culture” as thin and ephemeral as an overpriced meal in a tourist trap. You are already dealing with massive ignorance. You do not want to magnify the problem by making people superficial in five additional civilizations to boot. That would be like teaching people twenty words in Bengali, most of them having to do with what to order at a restaurant and asking where the bathrooms are, when those people are utterly lost in Shakespeare’s London or Hawthorne’s Salem. It would be like teaching them index-card platitudes about the Bhagavad-Gita when they have never heard the sentence, “In the beginning was the Word.” It is worse than pointless. It gives people the false impression that they actually know something.

Much of the work of reclaiming our Catholic schools must be done, I am persuaded, outside of the religion and theology classes. It is good to have such classes. But if they are not also seen as laying the foundation for a veritable cathedral of cultural and intellectual learning, then we have wasted a tremendous opportunity. The people in our public

Anthony Esolen

<https://journal.newmansociety.org/2018/04/secular-superficiality-versus-rootedness-culture/>

institutions will never understand Tennyson’s agony of faith and doubt, because they will not be reading Tennyson at all – religion, you see. But what does it profit us if we cordon the truth off in the safe space of a religion class, and do not allow it to leaven everything else we learn? We have the chance not to be ignorant. Nor let us scorn the assistance that arts and letters lend to the faith itself. They embody the faith in story and song. It is one thing to learn that no man can show greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. It is another to learn it and to have it pierce to the heart when you hear the story of Father Marquette. It is one thing to learn that unless a man be born again and become as one of these little children, he shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven. It is another to see the truth embodied in the proud and rich and practically godless Mr. Dombey, crushed, humiliated, and compelled to rely upon the daughter whose love he has ignored all of her life. It is one thing to learn that he who has Christ in him has all, and needs no earthly treasure. It is another to sing it out in Bach’s heart-piercing melodies.

We will know that Catholic schools have returned to the Faith, when we see that they have returned to imparting the cultural heritage that that faith has created over the last two thousand years. That will fall afoul of calls for the cruise-ship Diversity. Let it.

## Why Johnny Stopped Going to Church: Part 1

An interviewer once asked Pope Benedict XVI a question which parents also ponder: Why is it that, despite years of formation in Catholic schools, reams of our youth end up knowing more about, say, Buddhism (or environmentalism) than their faith? Benedict replied, “That is a question I also ask myself. Every child in Germany has 9-13 years of religion in school. Why, in spite of that, so very little sticks, if I may put it like that, is incomprehensible.”

It’s not only parents and priests in Europe that wonder at the loss. In Australia, a national study showed that a mere 3 percent of recent grads from publicly-supported Catholic schools attend Mass immediately after graduation – all the while believing that, in the words of researchers, religious beliefs are “purely personal lifestyle choices” (see Gerard O’Shea’s *Educating in Christ*, p.81). Again, in Canada the most recent comprehensive study of belief and behavior of students in Catholic schools revealed startling comparisons: if you are 15 years old and attend Holy Cross High School you are more likely to believe in a divine power and more pro-life than if you had studied at a public high school, which is good... but at the same time, you’re more likely to fornicate and smoke marijuana. (See the following charts from my book, *The Case for Catholic Education: Why Parents, Teachers, and Politicians Should Reclaim the Principles of Catholic Pedagogy*.) (*Ed. Visit the link below the article to see the charts.*)

In the United States, where parents have to pay for parochial schools, there is greater diversity in outcomes. When it comes to sexual belief and behavior, however, the situation is often just as bleak.

Why have so many of our schools failed to insinuate Catholic beliefs? Even after a Catholic education, why does Johnny stop going to church?

The causes, of course, are complex. Human freedom plays a role. So does our culture’s attack on the family. So does state-mandated aggressive “non-judgmentalism.” So do the poisonous melodies of Lady Gaga and company. But a new book encourages us to consider yet another source, often overlooked by educators: flawed theories of learning.

A few days ago I finished reading a study by the aforementioned distinguished professor of religious education, Gerard O’Shea, of the University of Notre Dame (Australia). O’Shea is a husband, a father, a grandfather, and served as a teacher or principal for thirty years prior to taking up work as an academic. He is now dean in Notre Dame’s School of Education. His book *Education in Christ: A Practical Handbook for Developing the Catholic Faith from Childhood to Adolescence* is a gem and reflects his broad experience both in the classroom and in the library.

The book’s first part invites educators to ground their art in an authentic anthropology. The second part sifts through the best of contemporary developmental psychology, particularly in the light of the Church’s own embedded “mystagogy.” Among modern psychologists, O’Shea finds Maria Montessori’s insights most compatible with classical virtue theory and the Church’s own method of introducing the mysteries of salvation through the Liturgy. I suspect any Catholic educator will find much in which to delight in these chapters, with pages of charts and pithy summaries of

official Church documents on education to boot.

What undergirds O'Shea's observations, and what I think is particularly helpful, is his deeper retrieval of the link between faith and reason in the act of teaching. The link is often ignored and, in education programs, sometimes deliberately undermined. In the next article in this sequence I'll take up some of the wider cultural causes that have strong correlations with loss of belief among Christian youth. But here, when we ask "why has Johnny stopped going to church?" one answer is: our pedagogy has sometimes directly undermined his motives for attending.

Too simplistic? Consider again. In the heady heydays of the 1970s through the 1990s the trend in education circles, including religious education circles, was to adopt theories of learning which seemed to fit hand and glove with the spirit of the times. Schools and colleges were trying to adapt to the new freedoms proclaimed in the 1960s. Out was structured grammar, calculus, and dry catechisms, in was "whole language" learning (aka: encouraging a child to read without teaching them the rules for sounding out words), "business" math, and in religion, often well-meaning books that tended to treat faith as an entirely personal and subjective experience.

Behind these experiments in textbooks and pedagogy, or at least partially behind these experiments, lay a novel theory of learning: "Radical Constructivism." The chief representative of this school is the education theorist Ernst von Glasserfeld (d. 2010), author of some 300 books, chapters, articles, and other publications. He once described his theory in this way: "Knowledge is the result of an individual subject's construction not a commodity that... can be conveyed or

instilled by diligent perception or linguistic communication." What this boils down to is: Immanuel Kant was right. Effort at conforming your understanding to an objective reality is wasted energy. Knowledge is something we "make up" – not something we discover.

Of course, von Glasserfeld was not the first to propose such an idea. Those who study the history of philosophy, even educational philosophy, could point to Richard Rorty, John Dewey, or Friedrich Nietzsche (or Kant) as the original sources for such a notion. But it was von Glasserfeld who helped make scepticism officially fashionable in educational circles – served up in education textbooks and B.Ed. programs as the latest "findings" in the "research" that any respectable teacher was now bound to accept.

Once such a view of "knowledge" is accepted, ethics classes descend into little more than clarifying "lifestyle choices"; once such a view is accepted, catechesis devolves into therapeutic moralism. Even more, once such a view of "knowledge" is embraced, any system or organization (such as the Catholic Church) that claims to teach "truth" must, of necessity, come to be regarded as an instrument of aggression, an agent oppressively forcing its ideology upon an essentially free will. This is the view that Philip Pullman's work vividly illustrates.

A thought experiment: What if our engineering departments decided that knowledge and meaning were categories we "imposed" upon the world? How many bridges would have to fall before we hauled out the professors and called them to account? Well, in Catholic schools, the bridges have been falling for a long time now.

Here we've taken up one of the intellectual reasons why our schools can't keep Johnny going to Church; in our next segment, we'll

take up some of the other contributing causes, in the home, and in our culture.

Ryan N.S. Topping

<https://journal.newmansociety.org/2018/04/why-johnny-stopped-going-to-church-part-1/>

## **Mother Killed on Southwest Flight was a Firm Believer in Catholic Schools**

Tributes from business leaders and politicians alike described Jennifer Riordan — the 43-year-old passenger who died April 17 from injuries suffered on Southwest Flight 1380 when its engine exploded — as a devoted mother, community leader, mentor and volunteer.

Riordan, a Wells Fargo executive from New Mexico, was a “thoughtful leader who has long been a part of the fabric of our community,” said Tim Keller, the mayor of Albuquerque. Susana Martinez, governor of New Mexico, described her as “an incredible woman who put her family and community first.”

But statements about Riordan that were closer to home for the parishioner of Our Lady of the Annunciation Catholic Church in Albuquerque and mother of two children at Annunciation School were issued by her family, who called her their “bedrock,” and her children’s school, which described Riordan as an “integral member of our school community.”

Riordan, who grew up in Vermont, attended Christ the King Elementary School in Burlington and graduated from Vermont’s Colchester High School in 1992. She married her high school sweetheart, Michael Riordan, in 1996 at Christ the King Church, according to the Burlington Free Press daily newspaper.

The couple had spent nearly two decades living in Albuquerque. Michael is a former chief operating officer for the city of Albuquerque and Jennifer was a vice president for community relations with Wells Fargo bank.

She was returning from a business trip in New York when the plane was forced to make an emergency landing in Philadelphia after its engine exploded in midair and shrapnel hit the plane breaking the window beside her.

Riordan was pronounced dead at a hospital from blunt trauma to her head, neck and torso, a spokesman for the Philadelphia Department of Health announced April 19.

As news of the tragedy spread, the assistant principal at Annunciation School where the two Riordan children attend, sent an email to parents confirming Riordan’s death and simply adding: “At this point, the family needs all the prayers we can offer.”

Santa Fe Archbishop John Wester said: “Our hearts go out to the family of Jennifer Riordan, who lost her life yesterday, April 17, during the tragic plane accident.” The archbishop also said he would “pray for the repose of her soul and for her dear loved ones.”

Annunciation School posted a statement on its Facebook page saying the school was “devastated to lose an integral member of our school community,” noting that Riordan often volunteered at the school and also served on its consultative council.

“She was seen on campus almost daily supporting her beautiful children. She provided encouragement to everyone with whom she came in contact. Her positive motivating spirit will be missed,” the statement added before concluding with the promise that the school community would “keep Jennifer and her family in prayer.”

A statement issued by the Riordan family said: “Jennifer’s vibrancy, passion and love infused our community and reached across our country. Her impact on everything and everyone she touched can never be fully measured.”

It also called her “the bedrock of our family. She and Mike wrote a love story unlike any other. Her beauty and love is evident through her children,” and the statement asked that in her memory people remember to “always be kind, loving, caring and sharing.”

The statement echoes Riordan’s own advice from what she said in 2015 after she was presented the Bill Daniels Award for Ethical Young Leadership by the Samaritan Counseling Ethics in Business Awards.

“As a parent, I’ve said to my kids, ‘Be kind, loving, caring and sharing, and all good things will come to you,’” Riordan told the Albuquerque Journal, about the award. “Integrity embodies the spirit of those four things, as well as high morals. It’s about knowing the difference between right and wrong, and choosing to do what’s right, even when it’s very difficult to do what’s right.”

Not only was Riordan dedicated to her job and school volunteering, but she also volunteered with several local nonprofit groups and boards.

She served on the boards of Junior Achievement of New Mexico and New Mexico First and was appointed by New Mexico’s governor to a board focused on boosting volunteerism in the state.

She was still on the board of directors at The Catholic Foundation, a nonprofit Santa Fe archdiocesan organization that links donors

to parishes, schools and organizations in need, and had planned to attend a meeting with the group in late April.

Ed Larranaga, the foundation’s president, said he asked Riordan, who had been his friend for 15 years, if she’d be on the board, but he also wondered if she’d even have time because she did so much.

“She was just thoughtful and probably the most positive person I’ve ever met,” he told Catholic News Service April 19, adding that people who didn’t know her well might have thought she was fake because “no one could be that positive and upbeat.”

Riordan told him over a year ago that Catholic education saved her life, saying she had been “going down a path with other people and friends” and her mom changed that direction by sending her to a Catholic school.

So even though she had a lot going on, she wanted to help Catholic schools through the foundation and by sending her children to Catholic school, he said.

“Jennifer wanted to do things to make a difference, not just at work and in the community, but just in general, she wanted to make things better,” Larranaga said.

And that spirit continues. Earlier that day, he received a phone call from someone in Michigan who didn’t know Riordan but wanted to do something in her honor. The donor, who attended Catholic schools, said he was impressed by what he read about her.

“That’s just the type of person she was,” always making a difference, is Larranaga’s view of the phone call.

He said even though there will likely be a private funeral for Riordan, he is sure there will be a public memorial as well at the

convention center because her “impact was that great.”

Carol Zimmermann

<https://thecatholicspirit.com/news/nation-and-world/mother-killed-on-southwest-flight-was-firm-believer-in-catholic-schools/#.WuHFHJxdDcY.email>