

ISSUES IN BRIEF

The Cardinal Newman Society
NewmanSociety.org



10 Ways Catholic Education Counters ‘Cancel Culture’

Catholic education is different: its mission is rooted in the truth and salvific mission of the Catholic Church, and it forms young people for sainthood. When addressing sensitive topics—like race or sexuality—Catholic education must never shy away from the truth about man and God. Truth is the foundation of charity and community.

The following are 10 ways a faithful Catholic education counters the toxic “cancel culture” and false ideology, summarized from the Newman Society’s Principles of Catholic Identity, Catholic Curriculum Standards and “Catholic Education’s Call in the Face of ‘Cancel Culture’” by Dr. Dan Guernsey and Dr. Denise Donohue (available at NewmanSociety.org).

1) Embraces a Catholic worldview, where faith and culture enrich and speak to each other. Always leads with Jesus, “the inexhaustible source of personal and communal perfection.”

2) Uses faithfully Catholic materials, always wary of speakers, materials, and programs that deny Catholic teaching, promote division, blame one particular group or culture for all the ills of humanity, seek vengeance, or stifle free speech and religious freedom.

3) Relates discussions to a Catholic understanding of the human person through a clear and convincing Christian anthropology. Affirms human creation by God as male or female and the union of body and spirit, as well as the common humanity and destiny of all peoples as originating with God and part of His design.

4) Relates discussions to Catholic social teaching, including the dignity of all persons, the sacredness of human life, the sanctity of marriage and its importance to human society and human fraternity amid national, racial, ethnic, economic, gender, and ideological differences.

5) Helps students discover the religious dimension in human history. Compares the actions of peoples according to Catholic morality and virtues but also the level of development of a person or culture and the conditions, knowledge, and understanding of the time.

6) Teaches students to analyze the morality of human acts, including separating the sin and the sinner. Helps them properly attribute degrees of culpability based on individual awareness and freedom, not generalizations about group behaviors. Affirms the possibility of repentance and forgiveness.

7) Teaches logic and reason to uncover objective truth, especially when emotions run hot. Promotes dialogue not for its own sake, but as a means of pursuing truth and unity.

8) Teaches Catholic values and concepts of charity, forgiveness, mercy, justice, and the common good. Shuns sins of calumny, pride, detraction, and rash judgment. Carefully selects music, art, movies, and literature to develop empathy, helping students enter into another’s suffering without directly experiencing it.

9) Avoids compounding tension and division, especially by the use of loaded language. Avoids politically charged terms and symbols that lack nuance, have distinct meanings for different people, promote an “all in” approach to complex social flashpoints, or emphasize conflict or political power. Carefully defines terms within a Catholic context and vocabulary.

10) Avoids replacing academic pursuits with activism and allowing curricula to be driven by the news cycle. Does not force students into protests, compel them to identify with morally ranked categories, or require activities to make them feel the pain of discrimination.