

OUR CATHOLIC MISSION

TRUTH AND FIDELITY IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

WINTER 2024

PARENTS AS PRIMARY EDUCATORS

- Making Sense of Parents as Primary Educators
- Forming Students in Collaboration with Families
- Parents' Role in Teaching Human Sexuality

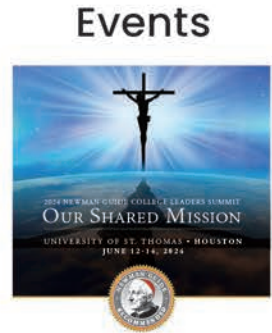
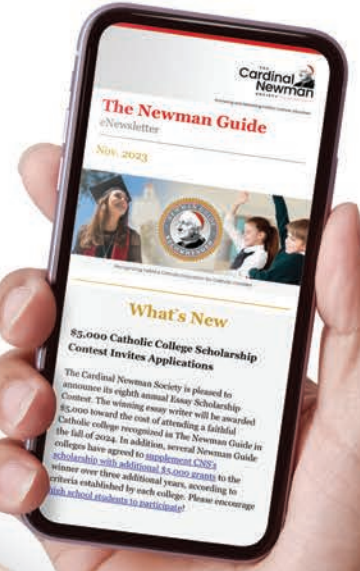
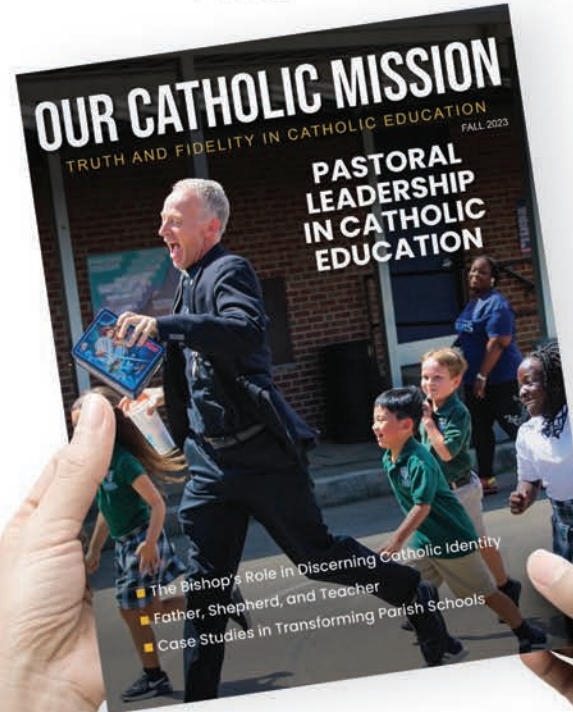
Are You Equipped with the Tools for Renewal?



Print

E-Newsletters

Broadcast



WINTER 2024 ISSUE

Dear friend of Catholic education,

Together, we're confronting the "educational emergency" declared by Pope Benedict XVI—and if we keep working together, we'll succeed!

Toward that end, I have some favors to ask of you.

You may know that 16 years ago, Pope Benedict warned that poorly formed young people were drowning in "doubt about the value of the human person, about the very meaning of truth and good, and ultimately about the goodness of life."

Confronting this emergency is the work of The Cardinal Newman Society, and we're excited to do it in partnership with thousands of parents, donors, clergy, and educators. In this issue of *Our Catholic Mission*, we focus especially on the role of parents and their relationship with Catholic schools.

Today even more than 2007, young Catholics are confronted with disbelief and false ideology. But together we are making progress in the renewal of faithful Catholic education, and your own contributions have been enormously important!

I urge you to keep doing all you can to keep up the momentum.

- Please, if you can **donate to support our important work in 2024**, send a tax-deductible gift today in the enclosed envelope. We urgently need your help to launch the new year!
- **Help get *Our Catholic Mission* to more Catholic teachers, staff, leaders, bishops, and diocesan leaders** by inviting them to subscribe (free of charge) at <https://cardinalnewmansociety.org/ocm-subscribe/>
- Support our advertisers (newly added to this issue of *Our Catholic Mission*!) and **consider advertising in *OCM* to reach Catholic educators and CNS donors**. Invite others to advertise and support this important outreach. Go to <https://cardinalnewmansociety.org/ocm/> for a link to our advertising rate card.
- Ask for St. John Henry Newman's intercession and **pray for this urgent work!**

Together, we can make faithful education even stronger and attractive to more educators and families! But **we need your help and donations** to change the lives of thousands of young people, in addition to everything else you do to strengthen Catholic education.

Thank you, and may God bless you!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Patrick



Patrick Reilly
President and Founder
The Cardinal Newman Society



Make sure you're notified when the latest FREE educational tools are available from The Cardinal Newman Society.
Scan QR code to sign up.

cardinalnewmansociety.org
P.O. Box 1879, Merrifield, VA 22116-8079
(703) 367-0333



Promoting and Defending Faithful Catholic Education



MAKING SENSE OF PARENTS AS 'PRIMARY EDUCATORS'

BY PATRICK REILLY

Parents are the first and foremost educators of their children.

Catholic educators can sometimes ignore this fact, especially when students appear to lack solid formation and even basic care in the home. Trained to be experts in pedagogy and curriculum, teachers and college professors may not think much about what parents want and may regard even simple communications from them as interference and undue distrust of professionals.

Parents, too, can forget or refuse their key role in the formation of their children, for whom they are accountable to God. Generations of parents have been told to take a hands-off approach to child-rearing. And many Catholic adults do not receive the sacraments and deny

Catholic teachings, while failing to form their children in the faith.

Still, the Church is clear: “Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators” (*Gravissimum Educationis*, 3).

So how does this work? Within the rapidly growing field of homeschooling, there is no parent-school relationship—but parents still must collaborate with home-school curriculum providers, publishers, tutors, priests, and collaborating parents. In schools and colleges, a “parent as primary educator” policy can be difficult to navigate. Yet respecting parents’ primary role is necessary, even essential, to Catholic education.

Sources of parents' role

Some have misread Vatican documents to imply that a parent’s role as “first” educator refers only to early, pre-school learning, and the role of primary educator must later be given over to professional teachers. But the Vatican speaks many times of the parents’ role in formation throughout a child’s life, and despite objections arising from our culture’s insistence that an 18-year-old no longer needs parents, I think today the job continues through college.

As for whether only professionals should direct education, there’s the obvious fact that, throughout much of Christian history until the last couple centuries, most parents partly or wholly handled the education of their younger children.

Parenthood, practiced rightly with due respect for the rights of the child, is a natural aspect of the vocation of marriage. It follows from the lifelong love and commitment of a man and a woman, producing offspring for whom the parents are primarily responsible in the graced bond of matrimony. If a child’s guardian is not a natural parent in a loving marriage, still the guardian assumes responsibility for providing an upbringing that attempts, as much as possible, to fulfill the nature and obligations of parenthood within marriage.

Education is a key obligation of parents. Vatican documents that reference parents’ primary role in education often cite the natural and divine status of the family.

Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and man... It is particularly in the Christian family, enriched by the grace and office of the sacrament of matrimony, that children should be taught from their early years to have a knowledge

of God according to the faith received in Baptism, to worship Him, and to love their neighbor. (*Gravissimum Educationis*, 3)

Here it is clear that the Church’s foremost concern for children is their integration into the life of the Church and their relationship with Christ. The family is vital to the moral and social formation of young people. However, does this suggest that intellectual formation belongs primarily to professionals and is not included in parents’ primary role? The Vatican documents repeatedly speak of parents’ primary role even when their children are enrolled in schools—even Catholic schools—and so parents must be responsible for intellectual as well as moral and social formation.







Photograph by Raiza Pantoja @classicraiza on Instagram

We can also find a foundation for parents’ educational role in the rite of Baptism. Parents affirm that they will raise their child in the Catholic faith. Many interpret this to mean catechesis only, but

WALSH UNIVERSITY

Proud to be a Top Catholic University

More than 60 Majors

NCAA Division II Athletics

Faith-filled Programs and Initiatives

Cardinal Newman Society Recommended


Online Degree Completion for Working Adults


AND FEATURING

Skilled Technical Workforce Training

Upskill Your Workforce

**3-day Online Custom Training Workshops*





WALSH UNIVERSITY
EDUCATION FOR LIFE



baptism begins the Christian's journey to salvation, which implies more than knowledge of the tenets and practices of the faith—as important as these are. The human gift of intellect is key to human dignity and our ability to know, love, and serve God and others. Surely the full work of Catholic education—forming the intellect integrally with one's physical and moral development, so that a young person is healthy, knowledgeable, wise, and virtuous—is entailed in Catholic formation. Therefore, it can be said that a Catholic child has a baptismal right to Catholic education from the parents.

A health analogy

St. Thomas Aquinas employs an analogy of bodily health when explaining how people learn. I think the analogy can also be applied to the question of a parent's role in education.

Consider this: aside from education, parents are responsible for ensuring a child's physical health. They do this by providing food and shelter, teaching healthy habits, and caring for illnesses and injuries. If a parent must seek the professional help of a doctor—and invariably this will be necessary in today's world—the

parent never considers simply handing over primary responsibility for the child's health. The doctor provides much-needed expertise, and the parent yields to that expertise to the extent necessary, but ultimately the parent must decide what is best for the child, including the choice of whether to get help for the child and which doctor should provide it.

Why is education perceived to be any different? One reason may be that schools require more waking hours with a child than even the parents have at home—and that's something I believe deserves

some reflection. But regardless, ultimately it is the parent's primary responsibility to ensure that a child is educated, and that includes the choice of educator. Yet so few parents today take up this responsibility, blindly accepting or even ignoring what happens in school.

Catholic educators may chafe at substantial parent involvement with a school or college's day-to-day activities. And it's right that Catholic schools limit such direct engagement, if it interferes with education. But parents must at least have the information needed to assess whether a school is serving the parent's needs and objectives for their child, so the parent can enter into dialogue with the school or choose to withdraw. The parent can also choose to take on a child's education entirely.

On the all-important matter of monitoring fidelity to Church teaching and fulfillment of the mission of Catholic education, "This responsibility applies chiefly to Christian parents who confide their

children to the school. Having chosen it does not relieve them of a personal duty to give their children a Christian upbringing" (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School*, 73). By "utilizing the structures offered for parental involvement," parents must "make certain that the school remains faithful to Christian principles of education."

Ultimately it comes down to this: parents must take full responsibility for the education of their children and the choice whether to employ professionals in that task—and which ones. Catholic educators, in service to parents, should fully support this role and help parents know and choose the special value of faithful Catholic education. In all, the complete Catholic formation of the student must be paramount.

OCM

PATRICK REILLY
is president and founder of
The Cardinal Newman Society.



FREE ONLINE COLLEGE-STYLE CLASSES

Amidst a culture that seeks to sweep away the roots and reasons for your Faith, free Catholic classes from Christendom College will help you thrive as a Catholic by knowing, living, and sharing your Faith.



PRINCIPLES
FROM CHRISTENDOM COLLEGE

GETPRINCIPLES.COM



SCAN ME

Forming Students in Collaboration with Families

by Dan Guernsey



It is easy for Catholic educators to love our students. Hour after hour and day after day, we forge human and spiritual bonds with them by learning, laughing, praying, and playing.

The Congregation for Catholic Education calls upon Catholic educators to provide “a community school climate that reproduces, as far as possible, the warm and intimate atmosphere of family life” (*The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal*, 40). The Catholic school does not try to replace family; instead we benefit from its natural strength in human formation and support its educational aims. We understand that “an integration of school and home is an essential condition for the birth and development of all of the potential which these children manifest,” including their openness to religion with all that this implies.

There is great benefit, then, for Catholic educators to focus on the family’s unique role in education and evangelization and to explore how we can best assist them, so they might better fulfill that role in relation to their children, the Church, and society. In so doing, we are faithful to our own mission. “Catholic schools consider essential to their mission the service of permanent formation offered to families” (Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School*, 48).

Responsibilities of the family

It is important that Catholic educators understand and make better understood the role of the family. Vatican II’s document on education, *Gravissimum Educationis*, is a good place to start:

Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and man, in which the well-rounded personal and social education of children is fostered. Hence the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs... It is particularly in the Christian family, enriched by the grace and the office of the sacrament of Matrimony, that from the earliest years children should be taught, according to the faith received in Baptism, to have a knowledge of God, to worship Him and to love their neighbor.

St. John Paul II develops this understanding in his apostolic exhortation to

the family in the modern world, *Familiaris Consortio*. He draws attention to the truth declared by Vatican II that the family is “the first and vital cell of society.” It is, he writes, “a community of life and love” which “has the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love, and this is a living reflection of and a real sharing in God’s love for humanity and the love of Christ the Lord for the Church His bride.” He identifies four general tasks of the family:

- 1) forming a community of persons,
- 2) serving life,
- 3) participating in the development of society, and
- 4) sharing in the life and mission of the Church.

It is the duty of Catholic educators to support this mission, particularly through partnering in the formation of the young, but also in empowering the family toward these broader ends.

Challenges facing our families

Most of Catholic school parents are now Millennials (born 1981-1996). Millennials are more interested in being involved in their kids’ lives than the prior generation, so we can be bolder in engaging with them in their children’s education. However, we must also appreciate that more of them are single parents (33 percent), live in dual-income households (60 percent), and are stressed and tired most of the time (29 percent) (“Millennial Moms and Dads are Striving to Parent Differently Than Boomers,” *Salon*, Jan. 26, 2023).

According to a Pew Research Center poll in January 2023, mental health tops the list of parental concerns about their children’s well-being. Four out of ten parents are extremely worried about their children struggling with anxiety or mental depression, and 36 percent are somewhat worried. More than a third (35 percent) are extremely worried about their children being bullied, and 39 percent are somewhat worried.

Pew Research also finds that, among our Catholic Millennials, 84 percent say religion is important or somewhat important to them, and 65 percent pray daily or weekly. These are workable numbers. But only 26 percent go to Mass weekly; 80 percent do not believe there are clear standards of right and wrong, 75 percent favor same-sex “marriage,” and 52 per-

cent think abortion should be legal in all or most cases. So we have our work cut out for us on these points.

Currently, 64 percent of Americans identify as Christian, and Christians are predicted to be a minority by 2070, which is when our current grade school students will be raising their own children. So there are even more challenging times ahead, but also opportunities for which our students and *their* future families must be prepared.

Reaching out to parents

In regard to our current parents, we need to draw upon their generally positive outlook on religion, encourage them to better understand their vocation as families, and get them back to Mass and a coherent moral program. In this way our students, their own children, will themselves be better equipped to survive and evangelize as religious minorities in a post-Christian, post-truth world.

Primarily this will occur for parents through deepening their encounter with the living God, who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth. While the Holy Spirit will be the protagonist and helper in this dynamic, Catholic educators should do all they can to help. And one of our greatest assets is drawing on children as points of parent evangelization.

A first step for Catholic schools is to fulfill their duty of faithful and dynamic evangelization of the children entrusted to them. When they become fully alive disciples, they will attract others, including likely their own parents.

Additionally, the Catholic school at some point must actually and specifically invite students who are not baptized or are not active Catholics into the fullness of life as faithful Catholics. It is very important for a staff member, or preferably a priest connected to the school, to actually inquire and *make the ask* at some point. Families may have identified as Catholic or Christian to get into the school, but it is possible some students from Catholic families may not have actually been baptized or non-Catholic students may now be convicted of the truths of the faith. For example, a new pastor at a faithful Catholic school recently asked to meet individually with each of the 310 students for discussion or confession. As a result,

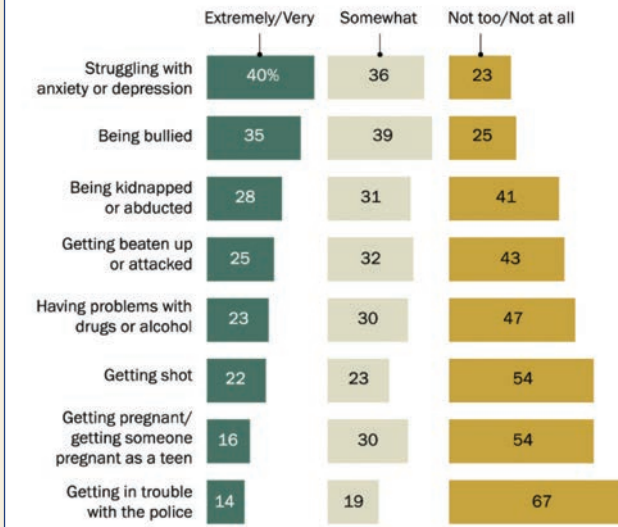
three students and eventually their parents sought baptism or full communion with the Church. The principal had been unaware that the children and families were hungry for the sacraments, but all the priest had to do was ask and follow up with RCIA.

Parent formation is another area for mission growth at a Catholic school. This can be challenging given the busyness of so many families. One strategy is to create mandatory formation nights for new parents, and then also offer ongoing formation nights for all parents every year (hopefully the new parents will continue). See Community and Culture Nights at <https://donahueacademy.org/community/community-culture/> for an example of this.

This will take an investment of time and money, but volunteers and donors will likely step forward. For new families, make these formation nights not just mandatory but also delightful. Provide free childcare; start with a wine and cheese affair, tastefully appointed; give away school bling or door prizes;

Mental health tops the list of parental concerns

% of parents saying they are ___ worried about each of the following happening to any of their children at some point



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. parents conducted Sept. 20-Oct. 2, 2022.
"Parenting in America Today"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

have name tags; have live music from students or community members; have three meetings in the first year to dynamically explain your mission; have parent, student, and teacher testimonials; show off your best teachers and students in brief

presentations; keep the evening to 90 minutes maximum; take attendance; and tape the event and have those who did not make it watch the podcast. The idea is to make sure the new parents know the Catholic mission, start integrating into the school culture, and invest in it.

For ongoing formation nights for all parents, keep the same kind of fancy "date-night" experience with good food, music, drink, and childcare, but broaden the topics to address ongoing areas of parent and family formation. These gatherings could be at school, a local nice venue, or even at parents' houses. Topics might include: social media and your child, cultivating authentic friendship, freedom and your child, Theology of the Body and courtship, virtue, and helping your child take up their cross. **OCM**

DAN GUERNSEY, ED.D.

is a senior fellow at The Cardinal Newman Society and program director for Ave Maria University's Master in Catholic Educational Leadership. dguernsey@cardinalnewmansociety.org



other ideas:

- Build a culture of family via the weekly school communication vehicle, by celebrating publicly that week's anniversaries and recent births.
 - Discuss with your child a passage from Scripture.
 - Think-pair-share homework assignments that involve parent participation.
 - To prepare for the quiz, have your parents use these flashcards.
 - Have the parents sign off on each religion homework assignment that they have reviewed for completeness and accuracy.
 - Have assignments or extra credit work which involve grandparents if possible.
 - Assign them to watch a streamable movie at home with a religious theme, and have parent/child discussion questions for them to complete.
- Require as a condition of enrollment that parents agree to make every effort to take their children to church each weekend.
 - Resources for parents to reduce screen time and social media in their homes, such as the "Postman Pledge" by Front Porch Republic.
 - Ensure all families have access to resources like the Formed network.
 - Establish a school-recommended list of films for families seeking something to watch together.
 - Rich access through a kiosk in school or sending to each family resources from the Knights of Columbus "The Building the Domestic Church Series."
- Invite parents to all school Masses and processions.
 - Resources for parents to create voluntary pledge groups whereby they assure that when students gather at their house, there will be an active parent presence in the home, no R-rated movies, sexually explicit music, violent video games, or alcohol, etc. For example, see the pledge at rethinkthedrinks.com.
- Say grace before meals and snacks at school, in the hope this simple practice will take purchase at home if not already present.
 - This is not an exhaustive list, but simply a few ideas to remind us all to find creative ways to support and love both our students and their families.
- Frequent Eucharistic adoration during the school year at school with the expectation that, if possible, students will spend 30 minutes in adoration at their parish church once each semester, and the parents will sign off on the form (and presumably take them and go themselves as well).
 - Teachers should intentionally create homework assignments that also target
- Resources for parents to create voluntary pledge groups whereby they assure that when students gather at

IT STARTS WITH YOU! TRANSFORM CULTURE IN AMERICA

Benedictine College is modeling community in an age of incivility, spreading faith in an age of hopelessness, and committing to scholarship in a "post-truth" era! Here's a peek at the plan:

- Form students who understand the value of community, faith and scholarship.
- Prepare alumni to be the next generation of leaders in their churches, careers, communities and America.
- Extend respect for traditional family values.

Join Benedictine College in its bold new vision to transform culture in America!

Benedictine.edu/Transforming



PARENTS' ROLE IN TEACHING HUMAN SEXUALITY

BY DENISE DONOHUE

SCHOOL LEADERS HAVE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY TO OVERSEE INSTRUCTION IN A CATHOLIC SCHOOL, WHILE STRIVING TO SERVE AND COOPERATE WITH PARENTS. BUT SCHOOLS SHOULD ALWAYS DEFER TO THE FAMILY ON TEACHING HUMAN SEXUALITY.

Education, in the first place, is the duty of the family, which 'is the school of richest humanity.' It is, in fact, the best environment to accomplish the obligation of securing a gradual education in sexual life. The family has an affective dignity which is suited to making acceptable without trauma the most delicate realities and to integrating them harmoniously in a balanced and rich personality. (Educational Guidance in Human Love, 48)

According to Church documents, human sexuality includes all the delicate and sensitive topics involved in how a person lives out their sexuality in the world, and the best place for securing this education is within the family.

Parental right

Many teachers and administrators are unaware of the Church's teaching recognizing this preference and the parents' right to refuse their child's attendance in sex education classes. They assume that since parents have placed their children in the school, the parents have agreed to all the curriculum presented. But parents have the first right to teach human sexuality to their children or, if they delegate this education to the school, to know when and what is being taught.

Sex education, which is a basic right and duty of parents, must always be carried out under their attentive guidance, whether at home or in educational centers chosen and controlled by them. In this regard, the Church affirms the

law of subsidiarity, which the school is bound to observe when it cooperates in sex education, by entering into the same spirit that animates the parents. (*Familiaris Consortio*, 37)

Anything that discusses human reproductive physiology constitutes human sexuality, even when presented within Church teaching. Parents need to provide consent, and most of them do gratefully if they are unsure how to approach this topic with their children from a Catholic perspective.

Regardless of parents' choices to opt in or out, teachers can take this opportunity to speak with parents about how the Church presents human sexuality within a Christian anthropological framework and moral grounding. Doing so is an act of charity and helps fortify the family

Morgan Stanley

The McLean Tower Group at Morgan Stanley

Helping You Align Your Faith and Your Financial Life.

At the McLean Tower Group, we are committed to helping you achieve your unique financial goals in accordance with your values. We believe that the way you manage your wealth is an opportunity to express faith, strengthen families and live out deeply-held values and priorities.

11951 Freedom Drive, Suite 1200, Reston, VA 20190
703-456-6052 • 888-386-6295
fa.morganstanley.com/themcleantowergroup

© 2023 Morgan Stanley Smith Barney LLC. Member SIPC

CRC 54-61319 02/23

J. Patrick Kearns, CIMA®
Investing with Impact Director
Senior Institutional Consultant
Senior Vice President | Financial Advisor
j.patrick.kearns@morganstanley.com
NMLS # 1383203

Sean P. Kearns, CIMA®
Family Wealth Advisor
Vice President | Financial Advisor
sean.kearns@morganstanley.com
CA Insurance Lic. #OM62122
NMLS # 1369295

Luc Sebrechts
Alternative Investments Director
Associate Vice President | Financial Advisor
luc.sebrechts@morganstanley.com
NMLS # 1739958

Michael J. McShea
Financial Planning Associate
Financial Advisor
michael.mcshea@morganstanley.com
NMLS #24-32105

against false teachings and errant ideologies abounding in society.

The Church sees her instruction in human love as part of the integral formation of the student and advises multiple ways for its presentation. Bishops and pastors of schools decide whether human sexuality programs are offered. Schools incorporating these programs sometimes offer parent classes in tandem with student coursework. Schools not incorporating a sexuality program might offer families curated materials to use with children at home. Schools that include classes on human sexuality maintain student modesty by separating boys and girls during discussions of reproductive physiology.

Teachers for these classes should be chosen for their affective maturity and their own peaceful integration of sexuality. These teachers must have a positive and constructive concept of life and “suitable and serious psycho-pedagogic training.” Teachers should work with parents, students, and other professionals if more severe issues needing psychological assistance is required. Parents, as primary educators of their children, are not to be left out of this communication at any time.

Four principles

In keeping with the guidance from Church documents, here are four principles to assist educators teaching courses on human sexuality:

1. Teach courses in human sexuality within a clear and convincing Christian anthropology. It’s important to situate a discussion about sexuality within God’s design for humanity and the beauty of the human race. Leverage the fact that this type of discussion often begins in the home, where children witness the birth of a sibling and their parents give thanks to God for the gift of a new life.

Teachers can instruct students in how God gives each of us talents that make us unique and how humanity has a special relationship with God, far greater than that of the animals. They can teach that we are made for communion and possess dignity simply through our humanity. St. John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body* is a good resource for teachers to learn more about the richness and complexity of the human person as a body/soul unity. The



FOUR PRINCIPLES

1. TEACH WITH A CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY
2. TEACH FROM A CATHOLIC WORLDVIEW
3. TEACH USING AGE-APPROPRIATE MATERIALS
4. TEACH IN COLLABORATION WITH PARENTS

Standards for Christian Anthropology, co-authored by The Cardinal Newman Society and Ruah Woods Press, can also be incorporated beginning in kindergarten to properly situate any succeeding discussion of human reproduction within an already laid Christian foundation.

2. Teach courses in human sexuality from a Catholic worldview and moral perspective. Humanity, created in original unity with God, lost its way through sin and was redeemed through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He guides us on the path to eternal life through His teaching and the Sacraments. Teachers should teach virtue and the avoidance of vice, the understanding of sacrifice, and supplication to God’s grace in tandem with any presentation of human sexuality.

3. Ensure that program and materials on human sexuality are at the child’s appropriate intellectual, moral, emotional, physical, and spiritual level. While an understanding of one’s sexuality begins when children are young, education in the mechanics of sexuality (or the misappropriation on one’s sexuality) should not be taught until after the “years of innocence” when the child reaches puberty. St. John Paul II, in *Familiaris Consortio*, calls these early years the “period of tranquility and serenity” (78).

This presentation is drastically different from what we see happening in public education, where young children are confronted — even ‘introduced to’ — drag queens and questioned as to whether they feel like a boy or a girl. In Catholic education,

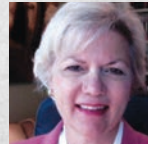
teachers are ever mindful of a child’s sensibilities, introducing discussion of the beauty of the human body in a manner of “sacramentality” — as an outward sign of an inner spirit, a body/soul unity. Avoid materials that could lead students to an unhealthy curiosity about sexual behavior.

4. Teach in collaboration with parents. Remember that parents are the first educators in this area. Assisting and working with them will have a positive and lasting influence on the sexual integrity and maturation of youth.

Key Church documents on this topic include *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* (Pontifical Council for the Family, 1995), *Educational Guidance in Human Love* (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1983), and *Catechetical Formation in Chaste Living* (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2008).

For Catholic school standards derived from Church teachings, see The Cardinal Newman Society’s *Policy Standards on Sexuality Programs in Catholic Education and Policy Standards on Human Sexuality in Catholic Education* at our website. **OCM**

DENISE DONOHUE, ED.D.
is vice president for educator resources at The Cardinal Newman Society.
ddonohue@cardinalnewmansociety.org



Supporting Homeschool Families

Dr. Jordan Almanzar

The burgeoning success of Catholic educational renewal in America, so much the work of faithful teachers and school leaders, is no less made possible by the devoted men and women who sacrifice for a better future for their children and grandchildren. Change had to begin at the fundamental level, that is, within society’s smallest institution—the family. “The highest good does not seek outside helps,” Seneca said, “it is found within the home.”

And while parents have been necessary to the renewal of Catholic schools and colleges, their heroic deeds are especially fruitful in the growing realm of home education. It is becoming noticed by the mainstream, with some studies claiming more than four million students are being homeschooled in the U.S. (circa 5.4 percent of all school-age children). To put this into perspective, in the spring of 1999—the year I was crowned valedictorian of my homeschool class of one—there were an estimated eight-hundred thousand homeschoolers. Since then we have more than quadrupled, and even before the Covid year of 2020, the trend had only been vertical.

The question now is, how can Catholic dioceses, parishes, and educators help support this growing demographic of homeschooling families? It

might seem that homeschooling is competition to the already declining parochial schools. But the same conviction that compels the Church to support Catholic schools and colleges should motivate support for families providing faithful Catholic formation in their homes.

I have had good experiences with various like-minded institutions in my area while educating my own children at home. My kids play sports and participate in activities at a local private school, where I also coach one of the teams. Magdalen College of the Liberal Arts, a Newman Guide-recognized college where I teach part-time, allows us to use their facilities, including their gym and outdoor

ice-skating rink, whenever we want. The students at Magdalen, many of them graduates of homeschooling themselves, have embraced my children like siblings of their own. The fall and spring “Coffee House” nights at Magdalen are perhaps my kids’ favorite events of the year—when they can perform music in front of and with a supportive group of students from across the country.

I realize that not everyone has access to such like-minded, homeschooling-friendly institutions. More faithful Catholic educational institutions should reach out to homeschoolers in their areas and invite them to collaborate toward the ultimate goal, the salvation of souls.



Simone Weil said, “Every order which transcends another can only be introduced into it under the form of something infinitely small.” The first step might be a simple invitation to homeschoolers (individually or as a group) to showcase an event at your institution. A music recital, an art exhibit, or a play is a good place to start. Homeschoolers would appreciate a real destination to display their talents, aside from Facetimeing the grandparents. In my experience, they take such opportunities seriously and with gratitude.

Another obvious means for supporting homeschoolers is to invite them to play sports at your school. Although regulations for this vary from state to state, it may be worth looking into. The Catholic Tim Tebow has yet to emerge, but all signs indicate that there will be an increasing number of quality athletes who are homeschooled. Additionally, there are quite a few homeschooling groups with enough students to form a team of their own; consider opening your facilities to let them practice and host games.

Newman Guide colleges can provide one crucial need—validation of home education. Already admissions departments in many Newman Guide colleges are generally welcoming to homeschool applicants. But it is unfortunate when students have to repeat in college what they already mastered in high school.

Each new academic year, there is at least one student in my college classes who does not really belong there. These are homeschooled students who have mastered certain subjects in high school, and yet they are required to repeat them in order to earn credits toward their college diploma. At least in the subject I teach, Latin, it should be pretty straightforward to validate proficiency and establish a means of granting college credit for work that was done in the home. And I am familiar with the requirements of certain homeschool programs that go beyond what is required at some colleges in other subjects as well.

To be sure, not all homeschoolers have mastered college-level subjects, but for

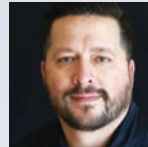
those who have, why should there not be a way to receive credit for some subjects from the college he or she chooses to attend? Sure, it may take some extra flexibility on the part of colleges, but flexibility is fundamental to homeschooling and would be a gesture of tremendous support for homeschooling families.

To complete the renewal of Catholic education in America, it will take an even greater pooling of assets toward a joint mission of educational renewal. I invite all faithfully Catholic educators to collaborate with and support this generation of homeschoolers. Any growth in Catholic education is going to result in strong Catholic families and greater interest in both new and traditional methods of education. We are just beginning the era of widespread homeschooling, and the future is bright!

OCM

JORDAN ALMANZAR

is the director of public and alumni relations at Kolbe Academy, an online Catholic classical education for grades K-12 in New Hampshire. He also teaches Greek and Latin at the college level.



Selling Faithful Catholic Education

by Kelly Salomon

Amid the corruption of public schools and the enrollment struggles of many lukewarm Catholic schools and colleges, Newman Guide-recognized schools, colleges, and graduate programs are often quite successful. By focusing on what makes Catholic education unique and valuable, educators can attract Catholic families to join their communities. Catholic families are increasingly seeing just how attractive it is to pursue the true, good, and beautiful.

Faithful Catholic institutions are graduating mature and faithful religious, parents, and leaders of tomorrow. Their witness is compelling, and they give hope for the Church and the world.

Selling success

Just recently, *Forbes* posted a popular report, “The 25 Colleges With the Highest Earning Graduates.” Newman Guide-recommended colleges didn’t make the cut.

Finances, both in paying for college and expected earnings after college, play an important role in the college decision-making process. Especially when many Newman Guide graduates marry young and are open to welcoming children, they need to make prudent financial decisions.

But the graduates of Newman Guide colleges do quite well establishing careers, and college leaders would do well to consider their market. Catholic families might be more interested in a report





JOHN PAUL THE GREAT
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY
Escondido, CA | www.jpccatholic.edu

The Catholic University for
CREATIVE ARTS
and **BUSINESS**
INNOVATION

 **FILM**

 **GRAPHIC DESIGN**

 **ANIMATION**

 **CREATIVE WRITING**

 **ACTING**

 **ILLUSTRATION**

 **NEW EVANGELIZATION**

 **DIGITAL MUSIC**

 **THEOLOGY & PHILOSOPHY**

 **BUSINESS**

 **GAME DEVELOPMENT**

 **SCREENWRITING**



SCAN ME

on “The 25 Colleges Best Preparing Students to Know, Love and Serve God in this Life, and Be Happy with Him in The Next.”

Indeed, Catholic families are finding and appreciating the Newman Guide difference. While total college enrollment in the U.S. has declined 14 percent since 2012, Newman Guide college enrollment increased more than 10 percent in the same period.



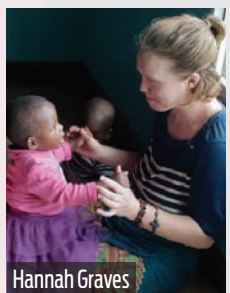
Sean Lee

Attending a Newman Guide college “changed my life,” says Sean Lee, senior director of operations at Word on Fire Catholic Ministries. “It gave me life-long friendships. It provided me with a strong

foundation for my future work. And it allowed me to encounter and deepen my relationship with Christ. I’m forever grateful.”

“[It] has been a bedrock for so much that I have done and do at Word on Fire,” he says. “Being able to think critically about ideas and issues has been very important in my work. ...Many of our staff members come from Newman schools, and we’re very blessed to have them. They are well-educated and very motivated by the missionary work of Word on Fire. We need more of them!”

A graduate of a Newman Guide college who now serves as a teacher and missionary in Africa says there’s “no better option” than faithful Catholic colleges for “being formed as a whole person for happiness and flourishing.”



Hannah Graves

“Any college can provide job training, but Newman Guide colleges are looking at students as a person created in the image of God—so yes, providing the skills and education needed to work in

this life, but also to be happy, both in this life and the next,” says Hannah Graves.



Sr. Mariae Agnus Dei

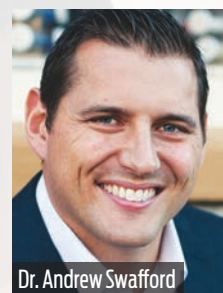
Another graduate of a Newman Guide College, Sister Mariae Agnus Dei of the Sisters of Life, agrees that faithful Catholic education is key to the “good life.”

“Choosing a Catholic college was a poignant moment of grace for me. I watched older siblings go off to secular colleges and return to the home emptied of their faith, and with that, the hope and peace of a life lived with Christ. I knew I wanted something different. God did too,” she explained.

“To those discerning colleges, all I can say is you will never regret choosing a place that is invested in forming, supporting and flourishing every dimension of your life — mind, body, heart and soul. ...The years you spend at college, the people you encounter, the culture in which you immerse yourself, will inevitably lay a foundation for the rest of your life. In choosing an authentically Catholic college, you will be on course to live the good life you desire and become who you were made to be.”

Still another Newman Guide graduate found deeper happiness than he was originally looking for by attending a faithful Catholic college.

“I came to [my Newman Guide college] as a student for one reason, namely, to play football,” says Dr. Andrew Swafford, theology professor at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kan. He recalls that a theology class “singlehandedly changed my life. I thought it would be about ‘rules’ of the Church and the Bible; I couldn’t have been more wrong. It was about freedom, friendship, virtue, happiness—all of sudden I could see why I wasn’t happy.”



Dr. Andrew Swafford

“That set me on the journey I’m on today,” he says. “In fact, I now teach the same class that changed my life so many years ago—Christian Moral Life!”

Differentiating Catholic education

At the K-12 level, Catholic schools have been closing for 60 years, due to a continuous decline in enrollment from 5.2 million students in Catholic elementary and secondary schools in 1960 to about 1.6 million today. But some Catholic schools are thriving, even in a tough environment.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School in Keller, Tex., which is recommended in The Newman Guide, was founded in 2000 with 146 elementary students and now boasts nearly 600. What’s the secret to its success? One religion teacher at the school explained how the Catholic faith “permeates everything” the school does.

At St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the faith is integrated into all subject areas by a faculty that is 94 percent Catholic, and the curriculum includes classical literature, recitation of poems and songs, writing and rhetoric, music theory, outdoor learning, Latin, and so much more. Students attend Mass weekly, and Adoration is offered several times each week on campus.

Between 1st and 8th grade, students spend the first ten minutes of every religion class reading select passages from the Bible, which results in having read most of the key passages of Bible by end of their time at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. They also spend ten minutes at the beginning of every religion class memorizing from the Baltimore Catechism.

One of the fifth and sixth students’ favorite activities is the “fascinating faith fact Fridays.” Students drop questions in a box throughout the week, the teacher prepares answers, and then presents those answers each Friday.

From PreK through third grade, students also experience Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, which is a Montessori-type approach that helps Catholic devotions become personal and taken to the heart of children. Appealing to both the intellect and the heart of Catholic students, the “lessons are truly meant for contemplation.”

OCM

KELLY SALOMON
is vice president of Newman Guide programs at The Cardinal Newman Society.
ksalomon@cardinalnewmansociety.org



We have told our kids they can choose from the list of faithful colleges for undergraduate studies. We have never expected these faithful colleges on the list to be perfect, nothing can be.

But what we have found in The Newman Guide has been beyond helpful in aiding our children in their quest for Truth.

Their lives are much richer, relationships deeper, and they seem more spiritual than we could have imagined.



Elisa Del Curto

Wife and mother of 10 children
Oakdale, CA



cardinalnewmansociety.org

P.O. Box 1879
Merrifield, VA 22116-8079
(703) 367-0333

© Copyright 2023 - The Cardinal Newman Society



Promoting and Defending Faithful Catholic Education



Promoting and Defending Faithful Catholic Education

cardinalnewmansociety.org

P.O. Box 1879
Merrifield, VA 22116-8079
(703) 367-0333 x117

Join a tight-knit community of bright minds and joyful hearts, and embark on a journey of intellectual discovery and personal transformation that will prepare you for a life of professional excellence and service to God and neighbor. Located in Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America is a unique pontifically chartered university where opportunities abound to study and live the Catholic faith together.

Visit catholic.edu for more information.

