



## Parents Guide



THE CARDINAL  
NEWMAN SOCIETY

Promoting and Defending Faithful Catholic Education

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# About the Project

The Cardinal Newman Society's publication of *Principles of Catholic Identity in Education* culminates an extensive review of Vatican documents from the past century to identify essential marks of a Catholic education.

It is our hope that the *Principles* will encourage new awareness of what makes Catholic education special and essential to the Church's mission of evangelization. At the Newman Society, the *Principles* serve as the starting point for all of our work in elementary and secondary education.

Although no project of this scope can capture every aspect of Vatican teaching, the *Principles* faithfully reflect recurring themes and key expectations of the Church for Catholic schools, with regard to their unique mission of evangelization and formation. As much as possible, the five principles cite verbatim the language from Vatican documents.

# Introduction

*Principles of Catholic Identity in Education: Parent Guide* is designed to help current and prospective parents reflect upon those elements the Church expects to be present in all Catholic schools and which distinguish them from other schools.

The reflection is structured upon five principles of Catholic identity derived from Church documents related to education. The five principles that help structure this guide and questions are: *Inspired by Divine Mission; Models Christian Communion and Identity; Encounters Christ in Prayer, Scripture, and Sacrament; Integrally Forms the Human Person* and *Imparts a Christian Understanding of the World*.

Part I includes a comprehensive and concise summary of each principle<sup>1</sup> and is followed by a series of suggested questions intended to serve as a tool for parents, as well as community members, to consider a school's Catholic identity.

Part II provides additional quotes from Church documents for individuals who might be interested in learning more about what the Church teaches in the areas covered by the principles.

## **Intention for Use**

*Principles of Catholic Identity in Education: Parent Guide* helps current and prospective parents consider the Catholic identity of a school.<sup>2</sup> Although essential, Catholic identity is only one of many facets which comprise a school's operations.

## **Suggestions for Use**

Prospective parents can use the guide while initially reviewing a school's website and marketing literature to see if the school might be

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1 A more complete exposition of the principles is available in these resources: *Principles of Catholic Identity in Education: Church Documents for Reflection* and *Principles of Catholic Identity in Education: Principles and Sources in Church Teaching*.

2 The Cardinal Newman Society has also created other assessment tools for schools including: *Principles of Catholic Identity in Education: Faculty and Staff In-Service* and our Catholic Education Honor Roll.

a good fit for their family. When touring the school, parents can ask a few of the most important questions from the guide which they feel are essential to their decision-making.

Current parents can use the guide to help aid the school in maintaining or improving its Catholic identity.

Part II of the guide offers additional quotes from Church documents to help parents attain a deeper understanding of what the Church teaches about her schools.

# Principle I

## Inspired by Divine Mission

Catholic education is an expression of the Church’s mission of salvation and an instrument of evangelization:<sup>1</sup> to make disciples of Christ and to teach them to observe all that He has commanded.<sup>2</sup> Through Catholic education, students encounter God, “who in Jesus Christ reveals His transforming love and truth.”<sup>3</sup> Christ is the foundation of Catholic education;<sup>4</sup> He journeys with students through school and life as “genuine Teacher” and “perfect Man.”<sup>5</sup> As a faith community in unity with the Church and in fidelity to the Magisterium, students, parents, and educators give witness to Christ’s loving communion in the Holy Trinity.<sup>6</sup> With this Christian vision, Catholic education fulfills its purpose of “critical, systematic transmission of culture in the light of faith”<sup>7</sup> and the integral formation of the human person by developing each student’s physical, moral, spiritual, and intellectual gifts in harmony, teaching responsibility and right use of freedom, and preparing students to fulfill God’s calling in this world and to attain the eternal kingdom for which they were created.<sup>8</sup> Catholic education is sustained by the frequent experience of prayer, Sacred Scripture, and the Church’s liturgical and sacramental tradition.<sup>9</sup>

### Questions to Aid Discernment and Review

#### *Mission and Educational Philosophy*

- ◇ Does the school’s mission statement and/or educational philosophy (typically found on the school website or beginning pages of the student handbook) reflect the mission of Catholic education to form students as disciples of Christ?
  
- ◇ Does the school’s mission statement indicate and explain any of the following areas? If so, how?
  - The school is a place of encountering God and his love and truth.

- The school has Christ as its foundation.
- The school is a community united with the Church.
- The school is faithful to the Magisterium.
- The school provides frequent opportunities for prayer, sacred scripture, and the Church's liturgical and sacramental traditions.
- The school engages in the integral formation of the human person – spiritual, intellectual, and physical.
- The school presents a Christian worldview of humanity emphasizing the dignity of the human person.
- The school transmits culture in the light of faith.
- The school prepares students to be instruments of evangelization.

◇ Is the school proudly and strongly Catholic in its identity?  
How is this evident?

## Principle II

### Models Christian Communion and Identity

Catholic education teaches communion with Christ, by living communion with Christ and imitating the love and freedom of the Trinity.<sup>10</sup> This communion begins in the home—with the divinely ordered right and responsibility of parents to educate their children—and extends to the school community in support and service to the needs of the family.<sup>11</sup> It unites families and educators with a shared educational philosophy to form students for a relationship with God and with others.<sup>12</sup> The educational community is united to the universal Church in fidelity to the magisterium, to the local Church, and to other schools and community organizations.<sup>13</sup>

The school community is a place of ecclesial experience, in which the members model confident and joyful public witness in both word and action and teach students to live the Catholic faith in their daily lives.<sup>14</sup> In an environment “humanly and spiritually rich,” everyone is aware of the living presence of Jesus evidenced by a Christian way of life, expressed in “Word and Sacrament, in individual behaviour, [and] in friendly and harmonious relationships.”<sup>15</sup> The school climate reproduces, as far as possible, the “warm and intimate atmosphere of family life.”<sup>16</sup> As members of the Church community, students experience what it means to live a life of prayer, personal responsibility, and freedom reflective of Gospel values. This, in turn, leads them to grow in their commitment to serve God, one another, the Church, and the society.<sup>17</sup>

All teachers and leaders possess adequate skills, preparation, and religious formation and possess special qualities of mind and heart as well as the sensitivity necessary for authentic witness to the gospel and the task of human formation.<sup>18</sup> Teachers and leaders of the educational community should be “practicing Catholics, who can under-

stand and accept the teachings of the Catholic Church and the moral demands of the Gospel and who can contribute to the achievement of the school's Catholic identity and apostolic goals."<sup>18</sup>

## **Questions to Aid Discernment and Review**

### ***Communion in General***

◇ Does the school environment evidence a Christian way of life that reproduces, as far as possible, the warm and intimate atmosphere of family life? How so?

◇ Does the school community appear open and inviting or overly exclusive? How so?

### ***Communion with Parents***

◇ Is the school community welcoming and appreciative of parents? How so?

◇ Are parents recognized as the primary educators of their children? How so?

### ***Communion among Students***

◇ Do students appear to treat each other with respect and kindness? Do students engage openly and freely with each other? Do there appear to be social cliques or other restrictive groupings? If so, how is this evident?

◇ Do students appear to help each other grow and flourish? Is there evidence of students showing each other compassion and acceptance? How so?

◇ How has the school addressed any bullying, detraction, or belittling? Is there a Gospel-based plan to address these types of conflicts?



### ***Communion with the Broader Community***

- ◇ Do students actively and joyfully defend the rights of the most vulnerable: the unborn, the elderly, the disabled, the homeless and shut-in, the handicapped and marginalized? How so?
- ◇ Are students active in service programs for the school and for the community? Do they perform voluntary service? How does the school assist students in developing a concern for others and the common good?
- ◇ How are students able to experience the universality of the Catholic Church beyond the school walls? Do students appear to feel at home in the Catholic Church and embrace it outside of the school experience?
- ◇ Does the school interact positively with other area Catholic schools, parishes, the diocesan school office, and auxiliary efforts of the universal Church?

### ***Christian Atmosphere***

- ◇ Does the faculty appear to enjoy their call to the apostolate of education? How is this evident?
- ◇ Do faculty members spend non-classroom time with students? When?
- ◇ Do faculty members interact and socialize with students in ways that are both appropriate and joyful? How?
- ◇ Do faculty members understand and offer mercy and forgiveness to students when they fall? To parents? Examples.

### ***Christian Vocation***

- ◇ Do teachers appear to naturally relate subject material to aspects of the Catholic faith?

◇ Do all faculty members frequently, openly, and naturally pray with students in both formal and informal ways? Do all faculty joyfully attend Mass and other prayer activities of the school?

### ***Christian Witness***

◇ In what ways does the faculty witness the Gospel message? Do they live the Gospel with integrity in the entirety of their lives? Are their personal witness and living consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church?

◇ How does the school assist faculty and staff with opportunities to grow in faith and in virtue?

◇ Since the Catholic mission of the school depends almost entirely on the faculty, does there appear to be fellowship among the faculty and unity in mission? How so?

# Principle III

## Encounters Christ in Prayer, Scripture, and Sacrament

Rooted in Christ, Catholic education is continually fed and stimulated by Him in the frequent experience of prayer, scripture, and the Church's liturgical and sacramental tradition.<sup>20</sup> The transmission of faith, catechesis, is intrinsically linked to these living encounters with Christ, by which He nurtures and educates souls in the divine life of grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>21</sup> By their witness and sharing in these encounters, educators help students grow in understanding of what it means to be a member of the Church.<sup>22</sup> Students discover the real value of the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, in accompanying the Christian in the journey through life. They learn "to open their hearts in confidence to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through personal and liturgical prayer," which makes the mystery of Christ present to students.<sup>23</sup>

### Questions to Aid Discernment and Review

Below are a series of questions to facilitate reflection and to begin a discussion of how one encounters Christ in the school. Choose areas for discussion as time allows.

#### *Prayer*

- ◇ Is prayer a norm in the school? How do you know?
  
- ◇ Do students pray:
  - at the start and end of school?
  
  - before meals?
  
  - before classes?

- before athletic events?
- at assemblies and events?

◇ Are students required to know traditional Catholic prayers and practices?

◇ Is quiet time and space provided for a peaceful encounter with Christ?

◇ Are retreats available? How many? Are they appropriate and effective? Do students enjoy and attend them and grow in faith? Are they spiritually substantial and well-organized? What evidence is there for these?

### ***Sacraments***

◇ How frequently do students attend Mass as a school? Is it required or voluntary? If voluntary, how many students attend?

◇ Are there opportunities for Eucharistic adoration, benediction, and/or processions?

◇ How often is confession available for students?

◇ Is quality spiritual direction available to students? Vocational discernment opportunities?

### ***Spiritual Life of the School***

◇ Does the faculty participate in the school's spiritual life?

◇ Are non-Catholic students invited to participate in the spiritual life of the school as much as they are able? Is there a program for students inquiring about joining the Catholic Church?

◇ Are parents involved in the spiritual and sacramental life of the school? How?

◇ How does the school celebrate the liturgical year, Holy Days of Obligation, Saints, and feast days?

◇ Is the Rosary prayed and special devotion given to our Blessed Mother?

◇ Is there a particular religious charism of the school that students know, understand, and practice?

### ***Sacred Environment***

◇ Upon entering the school, does one experience a sense of hospitality and sacredness?

◇ Are sacred works of art (paintings, statues, crucifixes, and other symbols) used to enhance the sense of transcendence and Catholic identity throughout the school?



## Principle IV

# Integrally Forms the Human Person

The complex task of Catholic education is the integral formation of students as physical, intellectual, and spiritual beings called to perfect humanity in the fullness of Christ, which is their right by Baptism.<sup>24</sup> The human person is “created in ‘the image and likeness’ of God; elevated by God to the dignity of a child of God; unfaithful to God in original sin, but redeemed by Christ; a temple of the Holy Spirit, a member of the Church; destined to eternal life.”<sup>25</sup> Catholic education assists students to become aware of the gift of Faith, worship God the Father, develop into mature adults who bear witness to the Mystical Body of Christ, respect the dignity of the human person, provide service, lead apostolic lives, and build the Kingdom of God.<sup>26</sup>

Catholic education forms the conscience through commitment to authentic Catholic doctrine. It develops the virtues and characteristics associated with what it means to be Christian so as to resist relativism, overcome individualism, and discover vocations to serve God and others.<sup>27</sup> “Intellectual development and growth as a Christian go forward hand in hand” where faith, culture, and life are integrated throughout the school’s program to provide students a personal closeness to Christ enriched by virtues, values, and supernatural gifts.<sup>28</sup> As a child of God, made in his image, human formation includes the development of personal Christian ethics and respect for the body by promoting healthy development, physical activity, and chastity.<sup>29</sup>

In Catholic education, “There is no separation between time for learning and time for formation, between acquiring notions and growing in wisdom”; education and pedagogy inspired by Gospel values and distinguished by the “illumination of all knowledge with the light of faith” allows formation to become living, conscious and active.<sup>30</sup> The atmosphere is characterized by discovery and awareness that enkindles a love for truth, and a desire to know the universe as God’s

creation. The Christian educational program facilitates critical thinking that is ordered, precise, and responsible as it builds strength and perseverance in pursuit of the truth.<sup>31</sup>

### **Questions to Aid Discernment and Review:**

#### ***Philosophy***

- ◇ Is knowledge and learning celebrated for its own sake and worth, or is knowledge viewed as a means to an end, a necessary commodity to get to the next level of high school, college, or career?
  
- ◇ Where and how are students formed in wisdom as opposed to simply knowledge? (Wisdom is the knowledge of ultimate causes, explanations, and principles. It addresses the big picture questions of life, such as “What is the purpose of life?” “What is a good life?” “Is there a God and how do I know He exists?”)
  
- ◇ Does a Christian understanding of the human person, as an integrated body and soul created in the image and likeness of God, form the basis for a balanced approach to student formation, especially in curricular and extra-curricular course selections and opportunities? How is this evident?
  
- ◇ Where and how are students exposed to concepts inherent to all of humanity, such as truth, beauty, and goodness?

#### ***Pedagogy***

- ◇ Are faculty versatile in the areas of both academic content and catechesis? Do they enrich discussions in any discipline or on any topic with a spiritual and faith-based perspective naturally and with ease? How is this evident?
  
- ◇ Are different academic disciplines explicitly related to reflect the unity of truth and the interrelationships among topics?



- ◇ Are students challenged to seek the Truth? Are there courses or programs to train students to see beyond public opinion and contemporary culture?
- ◇ Are adequate counseling and professional services available to students with special needs or circumstances?

### ***Spiritual Development***

- ◇ Does the school's catechetical effort appear well thought out and focused on the development of a fully integrated faith life which engages the students' intellect and will and finds expression in their day-to-day lives?
- ◇ Is religion class required each year for all students?
- ◇ Are students required to know the basics of the Catholic faith and doctrine appropriate to their grade level?
- ◇ Where and how are foundational principles of Catholic Social Teaching explicitly taught?
- ◇ Are all Catholic materials presented in catechetical coursework without any doctrinal error and completely faithful to Catholic teaching as presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*?
- ◇ Is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* listed as a textbook for religion classes? Other classes?
- ◇ Are there mixed signals that "some" Church doctrine is in error, can be ignored, or is not as important as others? How is this evident?

◇ Is Sacred Scripture an integral part of students' school life?  
How is this evident?

### ***Moral Development***

◇ Does the school teach and emphasize living a life of virtue?  
How and where?

◇ Is the discipline/formation program virtue based? Is the program developmentally sensitive and focused on human dignity and the flourishing of the person?

◇ Does the school incorporate the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* into all programs of moral development?

◇ Does the school have a program (separate or integrated into its theology program) advocating purity of life and chastity in all relationships?

◇ Are parents informed of and involved in all human sexuality programs administered by the school?

◇ Are parents allowed to opt out their students from these programs or other sensitive programs or initiatives of the school?

◇ Does the school address contemporary moral issues (such as gender identity and homosexuality) from a faithful Catholic perspective or do they give in to societal pressures?

◇ How does the school address the possible misuse of technology by students?

◇ Does the school make it a point to address the moral and ethical flashpoints between Catholicism and the common culture? Is instruction and personal witness by adults clear on the issues of the dignity of all human life and the particular evils of abortion

and euthanasia; the sanctity of natural marriage as the in-dissoluble lifelong union of one man and one woman; the beauty and fullness of human sexuality which can only be properly exercised by married couples in the service of both love and life? Where and how is this evident?

◇ Where does the school discuss issues of objective truth and moral relativism?

### ***Physical Development and Expression***

◇ Are there sufficient programs in place to address the physical development and expression of students?

◇ Do these programs support the integral formation of students by bringing in spirituality, intellectual growth, and maturing discernment? How so?

◇ Do extra-curricular programs assist students in developing into the fullness of their humanity in Christ? How so?

◇ Is there a protocol in place for the evaluation of new programs, or additional components to existing programs, to ensure they further the mission of Catholic education?

◇ Does the school offer dances or other social gatherings where students are instructed in aspects of appropriate social behavior, showing respect and dignity for members of the opposite sex, their peers, and adults?

◇ Is the school known for its sportsmanship and Christian witness both on and off the court or field?

◇ Are sports programs balanced with other curricular and extra-curricular activities of the school?

◇ Does the school have a pro-active, formative outlet to assist students who may be found struggling with drug, alcohol, or mental addictions?

◇ How does the school support at-risk students: those students living in poverty or with single parents or guardians?

# Principle V

## Imparts a Christian Understanding of the World

In the light of faith, Catholic education critically and systematically transmits the secular and religious “cultural patrimony handed down from previous generations,” especially that which makes a person more human and contributes to the integral formation of students.<sup>32</sup> Both educator and student are called to participate in the dialogue with culture and to pursue “the integration of culture with faith and faith with living.”<sup>33</sup> Catholic education imparts a “Christian vision of the world, of life, of culture, and of history,” ordering “the whole of human culture to the news of salvation.”<sup>34</sup> This hallmark of Catholic education, to “bring human wisdom into an encounter with divine wisdom,”<sup>35</sup> cultivates “in students the intellectual, creative, and aesthetic faculties of the human person,” introduces a cultural heritage, and prepares them for professional life and to take on the responsibilities and duties of society and the Church.<sup>36</sup> Students are prepared to work for the evangelization of culture and for the common good of society.<sup>37</sup>

### **Questions to Aid Discernment and Review - Traditions, Values, and Evangelization:**

#### ***Catholic Culture***

- ◇ Does the school exude a Catholic culture? How? (For example emphasis on Catholic traditions, stories, symbols, language, music, artwork.)
- ◇ Do students appear comfortable within this Catholic culture?

#### ***Common Culture***

- ◇ Do students have opportunities to interact with the best of common human culture? Are they exposed to the best of contemporary culture’s music, drama, art, and dance? Are students

exposed and formed in the best of culture's social etiquette (e.g., manners, politeness, and other social graces)?

◇ Are students challenged, equipped, and supported to stand strong against harmful elements of popular culture?

◇ Does there appear to be harmony between the school's culture and the Catholic faith, between faith and everyday living? Does the school "walk the walk" and not just "talk the talk"?

### ***Culture and Curriculum***

◇ Does the school attempt to integrate disciplines or concepts between one academic discipline and another?

◇ Has the school conformed to any educational paradigms or societal norms which jeopardize or dilute its mission of Catholic education?

◇ Do secular school standards (such as the Common Core, International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, etc.), in whole or in part, inform the curriculum? What particular Catholic standards are offered instead of, or in addition to, secular standards in each discipline so as to further Catholic culture and a rich intellectual life?

### ***Evangelization***

◇ Does the school address interreligious issues in theology classes, religious instruction, and throughout academic disciplines in a way that remains faithful to the evangelistic mission of the Church?

◇ Is emphasis placed on equipping students to transform and evangelize the common culture?

◇ Are teachers, through their personal daily witness, capable of providing an attractive example of faithful Christian living for students?

## **Questions to Aid Discernment and Review - History, Literature, & the Arts:**

### ***Literature Curriculum***

◇ Is literature selected that teaches by positive or negative example what it means to be genuinely and fully human and ethical as understood by the Catholic Church and as modeled by the one perfect man, Jesus?

◇ Is literature used to develop a general awareness of a lived Catholic worldview and approach to life? Does the literature we use accurately portray Catholics and the Catholic experience?

◇ Is literature selected to assist students to move beyond the “self”? Are sufficient examples of nobility, imagination, and healthy adventure presented to students for their inspiration and emulation?

◇ Are literature selections appropriate for the development and sensibilities or growth in virtue for students?

◇ Is literature selected to develop a general cultural literacy and familiarity with the great works of the world? Where, and how, do students gain cultural literacy of the great books which have influenced western thought?

◇ Is literature and reading promoted for the sheer joy and creativity of the experience? Are the imaginations of students properly feed with excellent works letting them grow in wonder and delight?

◇ Is there a written process explained within the parent/student handbook or website allowing for parental concerns to literature selections?

### ***History Curriculum***

◇ Does the school present history from a Catholic worldview? If secular textbooks are used, how are they supplemented to achieve this?

◇ Does the school's program include an account of the history of the Catholic Church and its impact in human events? How and where does the program include the stories of important Catholic figures and saints in the development of human history?

◇ How are students challenged to evaluate history in light of Catholic moral norms so as to improve their own moral life and decision-making?

◇ How is history used to discover the motivating values that have informed particular societies and how these motivating values correlate with Catholic teaching?

◇ Does the social studies curriculum help students understand and commit to the common good, particularly the needs of the poor, injustices, human rights and dignity, and threats to religious freedom?

### ***Music and Arts Curriculum***

◇ Does the school have a robust music and visual arts program? How active is it?

◇ In what ways does the school help students develop a discriminating taste for art or music?



◇ Does the school's program nurture healthy creativity, mirroring that part of humanity that makes us in the image and likeness of God?

## **Questions to Aid Discernment and Review - Science and Math:**

### ***Science Curriculum***

◇ Is it evident that the Catholic faith is integrated into the science curriculum?

◇ Does the science curriculum promote the unity of faith and reason, instilling confidence there exists no contradiction between the God of nature and the God of faith? How? Where?

◇ Does the science curriculum develop in students a deep sense of wonder about the natural universe and the beauty and goodness of God? How is this evident?

◇ Does the science program use any additional faith-based materials, or does the school provide a separate scientific topics course or class time, to discuss complex issues of creation, evolution, care for the environment, and respect for the human person (and the human body) from a Catholic perspective?

◇ Does the science program present the significant contributions of the Catholic Church and Catholic scientists such as Mendel, Lavoisier, Pasteur, Galileo, Gregor, Volta, and Copernicus?

### ***Mathematics Curriculum***

◇ Does the mathematics program assist students to see beauty within the academic discipline?

◇ Does the school use mathematics as a tool to develop intellectual discipline and a love of order?

◇ Is mathematics seen as a tool to open the mind to the wonders of creation? Is a sense of wonder developed about mathematical relationships and the glory and dignity of human reason as both a gift from God and a reflection of Him?

◇ Are students guided in developing their reason for precise, determined, and accurate questioning and inquiry in the pursuit of infinite and ultimate knowledge and Truth?

## Part II

### Further Reflection on What the Church Teaches About Principle I – *Inspired by Divine Mission*

Vatican II describes a Catholic school's mission as one of leading all students to salvation by helping them become prayerful, moral, and Christ-like individuals to build the Church on earth, evangelize the world, and contribute to the common good.

A Christian education does not merely strive for the maturing of a human person as just now described, but has as its principal purpose this goal: that the baptized, while they are gradually introduced the knowledge of the mystery of salvation, become ever more aware of the gift of Faith they have received, and that they learn in addition how to worship God the Father in spirit and truth (cf. John 4:23) especially in liturgical action, and be conformed in their personal lives according to the new man created in justice and holiness of truth (Eph. 4:22-24); also that they develop into perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:13) and strive for the growth of the Mystical Body; moreover, that aware of their calling, they learn not only how to bear witness to the hope that is in them (cf. Peter 3:15) but also how to help in the Christian formation of the world that takes place when natural powers viewed in the full consideration of man redeemed by Christ contribute to the good of the whole society.<sup>38</sup>

This notion is carried forth in subsequent documents which again emphasize the evangelizing mission of Catholic education for personal sanctification and social reform.

Catholic education is an expression of the mission entrusted by Jesus to the Church He founded. Through education, the Church seeks to prepare its members to proclaim the Good News and to translate this proclamation into action. Since the Christian vocation is a call to transform oneself and society with God's help, the ed-

educational efforts of the Church must encompass the twin purposes of personal sanctification and the social reform in light of Christian values.<sup>39</sup>

How a school accomplishes this mission includes many elements, but chief among them are a focus on Christ, especially his life and his teachings. Church documents on education consistently emphasize a Christocentric dimension for the school's existence.

Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school. His revelation gives new meaning to life and helps man to direct his thought, action and will according to the Gospel, making the beatitudes his norm of life. The fact that in their own individual ways all members of the school community share this Christian vision makes the school "Catholic"; principles of the Gospel in this manner become the educational norms since the school then has them as its internal motivation and final goal.<sup>40</sup>

In a Catholic school, everyone should be aware of the living presence of Jesus the "Master" who, today as always, is with us in our journey through life as the one genuine "Teacher," the perfect Man in whom all human values find their fullest perfection. The inspiration of Jesus must be translated from the ideal into the real. The gospel spirit should be evident in a Christian way of thought and life which permeates all facets of the educational climate.<sup>41</sup>

We also need to ensure our students encounter His presence in Scripture, in the Sacraments, in prayer, in each other, and in their studies. As Pope Benedict XVI noted:

First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 4). This relationship elicits a desire to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Christ and his teaching. In this way those who meet him are drawn by the very power of the Gospel to lead a new life characterized by all that is beautiful, good, and true; a life of Christian witness nurtured and strengthened within the community of our Lord's disciples, the Church.<sup>42</sup>

This helps create a distinctive Catholic school experience in culture, climate, and community.

The Catholic school pursues cultural goals and the natural development of youth to the same degree as any other school. What makes the Catholic school distinctive is its attempt to generate a community climate in the school that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love...The Council, therefore, declared that what makes the Catholic school distinctive is its religious dimension, and that this is to be found in a) the educational climate, b) the personal development of each student, c) the relationship established between culture and the Gospel, d) the illumination of all knowledge with the light of faith.<sup>43</sup>

A further distinctive element to the mission and experience of a Catholic school is its dedication to integral formation. This integral formation is the unique way the Church responds to the complex and real crisis of the age facing her children and facing the world as a whole.

Education today is a complex task, which is made more difficult by rapid social, economic, and cultural changes. Its specific mission remains the integral formation of the human person. Children and young people must be guaranteed the possibility of developing harmoniously their own physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual gifts, and they must also be helped to develop their sense of responsibility, learn the correct use of freedom, and participate actively in social life (cf. c. 795 Code of Canon Law [Law]; c. 629 Code of Canons for the Eastern Churches [CCEO]). A form of education that ignores or marginalises the moral and religious dimension of the person is a hindrance to full education, because “children and young people have a right to be motivated to appreciate moral values with a right conscience, to embrace them with a personal adherence, together with a deeper knowledge and love of God.<sup>44</sup>

In summary, Catholic education is part of the saving mission of the Church.

She establishes her own schools because she considers them as a privileged means of promoting the formation of the whole man, since the school is a center in which a specific concept of the

world, of man, and of history is developed and conveyed. The Catholic school forms part of the saving mission of the Church, especially for education in the faith. Remembering that, “the simultaneous development of man’s psychological and moral consciousness is demanded by Christ almost as a pre-condition for the reception of the befitting divine gifts of truth and grace”. The Church fulfills her obligation to foster in her children a full awareness of their rebirth to a new life. It is precisely in the Gospel of Christ, taking root in the minds and lives of the faithful, that the Catholic school finds its definition as it comes to terms with the cultural conditions of the times.<sup>45</sup>

It must never be forgotten that the purpose of instruction at school is education, that is, the development of man from within, freeing him from that conditioning which would prevent him from becoming a fully integrated human being. The school must begin from the principle that its educational program is intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person.<sup>46</sup>

# Further Reflection on What the Church Teaches About Principle II - *Models Christian Communion and Identity*

## **Part 1 - Encourages and Participates in Christian Communion**

The Church teaches that education cannot be accomplished in isolation but finds success when all those responsible for the education of the child work together.

Because its aim is to make man more man, education can be carried out authentically only in a relational and community context. It is not by chance that the first and original educational environment is that of the natural community of the family. Schools, in their turn, take their place beside the family as an educational space that is communitarian, organic and intentional and they sustain their educational commitment, according to a logic of assistance.<sup>47</sup>

Through the building up of interpersonal relationships between colleagues, students, and families as well as between the school community and universal Church and

By giving witness of communion, the Catholic educational community is able to *educate for communion*, which, as a gift that comes from above, animates the project of formation for living together in harmony and being welcoming. Not only does it cultivate in the students the cultural values that derive from the Christian vision of reality, but it also involves each one of them in the life of the community, where values are mediated by authentic interpersonal relationships among the various members that form it, and by the individual and community acceptance of them. In this way, the life of communion of the educational community assumes the value of an educational principle, of a paradigm that directs its formational action as a service for the achievement of a culture of communion.<sup>48</sup>

This community facilitates openness for the sharing of values and must not remain an ideal but become a lived and felt reality.

The school must be a community whose values are communicated through the interpersonal and sincere relationships of its members and through both individual and corporative adherence to the outlook on life that permeates the school.<sup>49</sup>

How is this done?

Some of the conditions for creating a positive and supportive climate are the following: that everyone agree with the educational goals and cooperate in achieving them; that interpersonal relationships be based on love and Christian freedom; that each individual, in daily life, be a witness to Gospel values; that every student be challenged to strive for the highest possible level of formation, both human and Christian. In addition, the climate must be one in which families are welcomed, the local Church is an active participant, and civil society—local, national, and international—is included. If all share a common faith, this can be an added advantage.<sup>50</sup>

So while the community of the school builds on the family and is lived and nurtured within its walls, the students should also experience a sense of belonging to the community of the universal Church.

Concretely, the educational goals of the school include a concern for the life and the problems of the Church, both local and universal. These goals are attentive to the Magisterium, and include cooperation with Church authorities. Catholic students are helped to become active members of the parish and diocesan communities. They have opportunities to join Church associations and Church youth groups, and they are taught to collaborate in local Church projects.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, this ecclesial community is destined not for itself but to be of service to the common good of the world through evangelization and service.

More than any other program of education sponsored by the Church, the Catholic school has the opportunity and obligation to be unique, contemporary, and oriented to Christian service; unique because it is distinguished by its commitment to the threefold pur-



pose of Christian education and by its total design and operation which foster the integration of religion with the rest of learning and living; contemporary because it enables students to address with Christian insight the multiple problems which face individuals and society today; oriented to Christian service because it helps students acquire skills, virtues, and habits of heart and mind required for effective service to others.<sup>52</sup>

## **Part 2 - Models Communion in Christ**

The community of a Catholic school begins with its faculty and staff and is fostered by its board. Teachers play a special role in creating an enriching atmosphere throughout the school.

In the Catholic school, “prime responsibility for creating this unique Christian school climate rests with the teachers, as individuals and as a community”. Teaching has an extraordinary moral depth and is one of man’s most excellent and creative activities, for the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the very spirits of human beings. The personal relations between the teacher and the students, therefore, assume an enormous importance and are not limited simply to giving and taking. Moreover, we must remember that teachers and educators fulfill a specific Christian vocation and share an equally specific participation in the mission of the Church, to the extent that “it depends chiefly on them whether the Catholic school achieves its purpose.”<sup>53</sup>

For this reason, Catholic educators need a “formation of the heart”: they need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others, so that their educational commitment becomes «a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love. In fact, even care for instruction means loving. It is only in this way that they can make their teaching a school of faith, that is to say, a transmission of the Gospel, as required by the educational project of the Catholic school.<sup>54</sup>

The success of the faculty and staff in creating a community that assists in leading students to communion with Christ and His Church depends upon their authentic witness and faithfulness in both word and action.

The more completely an educator can give concrete witness to the model of the ideal person [Christ] that is being presented to the students, the more this ideal will be believed and imitated.<sup>55</sup>

### In light of this, the Church insists

Instruction and education in a Catholic school must be based on the principles of Catholic doctrine, and the teachers must be outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life.<sup>56</sup>

Because authentic and lived teaching and living in communion is so critical to a Catholic school's mission, the board needs to hire a faithful and practicing Catholic principal who in turn is capable of identifying and hiring Catholic teachers willing to participate in the mission of Catholic education to the fullest extent possible.

Under the direction of the pastor or the duly elected or appointed school board, the principal of the Catholic school plays a crucial role in achieving the catechetical objectives of the parish... Therefore, the principal of a Catholic school must be a practicing Catholic in good standing who understands and accepts the teachings of the Church and the moral demands of the Gospel.<sup>57</sup>

As a catechetical leader in the Catholic School, the principal is called to recruit teachers who are practicing Catholics, who can understand and accept the teachings of the Catholic Church and the moral demands of the gospel, and who can contribute to the achievement of the school's Catholic identity and apostolic goals... As a catechetical leader in the Catholic school, the principal is called to provide opportunities for ongoing catechesis for faculty members... The distinctive Catholic identity and mission of the Catholic school also depend on the efforts and example of the whole faculty... All teachers in Catholic schools share in the catechetical ministry... While some situations might entail compelling reasons for members of another faith tradition to teach in a Catholic school, as much as possible, all teachers in a Catholic school should be practicing Catholics.<sup>58</sup>

## Further Reflection on What the Church Teaches About Principle III - *Encounters Christ in Prayer, Scripture, and Sacrament*

The community comprising the Catholic school finds its source of nourishment in the Word, in the Sacraments, and in the traditions of the Church.

No Catholic school can adequately fulfill its educational role on its own. It must continually be fed and stimulated by its Source of life, the Saving Word of Christ as it is expressed in Sacred Scripture, in Tradition, especially liturgical and sacramental tradition, and in the lives of people, past and present, who bear witness to that Word.<sup>59</sup>

In a Catholic school, prayer and Gospel values facilitate harmony and a desire for service.

Within such communities, teachers and pupils experience together what it means to live a life of prayer, personal responsibility and freedom reflective of Gospel values. Their fellowship helps them grow in their commitment to service God, one another, the Church and the general community.<sup>60</sup>

This ardent and vibrantly lived life of prayer and faith must not be hidden but freely and naturally expressed.

From the first moment that a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illumined by the light of faith, and having its own unique characteristics.<sup>61</sup>

Moreover, the Catholic school is well aware that the community that it forms must be constantly nourished and compared with the sources from which the reason for its existence derives: the saving word of God in Sacred Scripture, in Tradition, above all liturgical and sacramental Tradition, enlightened by the Magisterium of the Church.<sup>62</sup>

The characteristics of a rich faith life include easily identifiable representations of the spiritual life such as crucifixes, statues, or pictures

of saints, and a place set aside for prayer. It also involves introducing students to traditional Catholic prayers, traditions of the Church, and spiritual devotions, especially Marian devotions.

An awareness of Mary's presence can be a great help toward making the school into a "home". Mary, Mother and Teacher of the Church, accompanied her Son as he grew in wisdom and grace; from its earliest days, she has accompanied the Church in its mission of salvation.<sup>63</sup>

As important as these Catholic devotions are, an essential element to any Catholic school is a rich and faithful sacramental life.

An understanding of the sacramental journey has profound educational implications. Students become aware that being a member of the Church is something dynamic, responding to every person's need to continue growing all through life. When we meet the Lord in the Sacraments, we are never left unchanged. Through the Spirit, he causes us to grow in the Church, offering us "grace upon grace"; the only thing he asks is our cooperation. The educational consequences of this touch on our relationship with God, our witness as a Christian, and our choice of a personal vocation.<sup>64</sup>

Especially important in the Church documents is a rich Eucharistic component.

The essential point for students to understand is that Jesus Christ is always truly present in the Sacraments which he has instituted, and his presence makes them efficacious means of grace. The moment of closest encounter with the Lord Jesus occurs in the Eucharist, which is both Sacrifice and Sacrament. In the Eucharist, two supreme acts of love are united: Our Lord renews his sacrifice of salvation for us, and he truly gives himself to us.<sup>65</sup>

In the life of a Catholic school, the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation become frequent, lived, and loving encounters with God.

The teacher will assist students to open their hearts in confidence to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through personal and liturgical prayer. The latter is not just another way of praying; it is the official prayer of the Church, which makes the mystery of Christ present in our

lives—especially through the Eucharist, Sacrifice and Sacrament, and through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Religious experiences are then seen, not as something externally imposed, but as a free and loving response to the God who first loved us. The virtues of faith and religion, thus rooted and cultivated, are enabled to develop during childhood, youth, and in all the years that follow.<sup>66</sup>

As with all elements of the integral formation of its students, the authentic and lived example of the faculty and staff play a critical role in the success of the school's mission.

As a visible manifestation of the faith they profess and the life witness they are supposed to manifest, it is important that lay Catholics who work in a Catholic school participate simply and actively in the liturgical and sacramental life of the school. Students will share in this life more readily when they have concrete examples: when they see the importance that this life has for believers. In today's secularized world, students will see many lay people who call themselves Catholics, but who never take part in liturgy or sacraments. It is very important that they also have the example of lay adults who take such things seriously, who find in them a source and nourishment for Christian living.<sup>67</sup>



# Further Reflection on What the Church Teaches About Principle IV - *Integrally Forms the Human Person*

## Part 1- Integral Formation Focused on Intellectual Development

The Catholic intellectual tradition is about more than simply maximizing intellectual skills; it is about ensuring the intellect is authentically human, integrated, and oriented toward wisdom.

Catholic schools are encouraged to promote a wisdom-based society, to go beyond knowledge and educate people to think, evaluating facts in the light of values.<sup>68</sup>

This intellectual work unites all three elements of truth, beauty, and goodness in a pursuit of wisdom, but especially a virtuous and rigorous search for truth.

Within the overall process of education, special mention must be made of the intellectual work done by students. Although Christian life consists in loving God and doing his will, intellectual work is intimately involved. The light of Christian faith stimulates a desire to know the universe as God's creation. It enkindles a love for the truth that will not be satisfied with superficiality in knowledge or judgment. It awakens a critical sense which examines statements rather than accepting them blindly. It impels the mind to learn with careful order and precise methods, and to work with a sense of responsibility. It provides the strength needed to accept the sacrifices and the perseverance required by intellectual labor.<sup>69</sup>

We do not just seek knowledge for the sake of power and utility, but rather for complete human flourishing and complete human formation.

In the Catholic school's educational project there is no separation between time for learning and time for formation, between acquiring notions and growing in wisdom. The various school subjects do not present only knowledge to be attained, but also values to be acquired and truths to be discovered.<sup>70</sup>

The Church does not shy away from a bold claim to know and teach the truth in a modern relativistic culture. St. John Paul II encouraged American educators to realize,

The greatest challenge to Catholic education in the United States today, and the greatest contribution that authentically Catholic education can make to American culture, is to restore to that culture the conviction that human beings can grasp the truth of things, and in grasping that truth can know their duties to God, to themselves and their neighbors. The contemporary world urgently needs the service of educational institutions which uphold and teach that truth is “that fundamental value without which freedom, justice and human dignity are extinguished.”<sup>71</sup>

## **Part 2 - Integral Formation Focused on Spiritual Development**

All schools focus on developing the intellect, but Catholic schools have a long history of particularly excelling in this academic enterprise. We have the added advantage of being able to actively form all aspects of the human person, especially the spiritual dimension. The spiritual life we model and the spiritual truths we teach must be completely faithful to the Church and should permeate and sit proudly alongside all academic disciplines of a school’s program.

The integration of religious truth and values with life distinguishes the Catholic school from other schools. This is a matter of crucial importance today in view of contemporary trends and pressures to compartmentalize life and learning and to isolate the religious dimension of existence from other areas of human life.<sup>72</sup>

One component of this integral development is the teaching of Catholic doctrine.

Educational programs for the young must strive to teach doctrine, to do so within the experience of Christian community, and to prepare individuals for effective Christian witness and service to others. In doing this they help foster the student’s growth in personal holiness and his relationship with Christ.<sup>73</sup>



The presentation of Catholic doctrine via religious instruction is not the whole of the school's efforts; a catechetical component is also involved.

Religious instruction is appropriate in every school, for the purpose of the school is human formation in all of its fundamental dimensions, and the religious dimension is an integral part of this formation. Religious education is actually a right—with the corresponding duties—of the student and of the parents. It is also, at least in the case of the Catholic religion, an extremely important instrument for attaining the adequate synthesis of faith and culture that has been insisted on so often. Therefore, the teaching of the Catholic religion, distinct from and at the same time complementary to catechesis properly so called, ought to form a part of the curriculum of every school.<sup>74</sup>

An result of this process is a religious formation that leads to an active and lived life of faith and worship.

The life of faith is expressed in acts of religion. The teacher will assist students to open their hearts in confidence to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through personal and liturgical prayer. The latter is not just another way of praying; it is the official prayer of the Church, which makes the mystery of Christ present in our lives—especially through the Eucharist, Sacrifice and Sacrament, and through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Religious experiences are then seen, not as something externally imposed, but as a free and loving response to the God who first loved us. The virtues of faith and religion, thus rooted and cultivated, are enabled to develop during childhood, youth, and in all the years that follow.<sup>75</sup>

### **Part 3 - Integral Formation Focused on Moral Development**

The intellectual and spiritual formation we provide our students assists them in living a life of virtue guided by a well-formed Catholic conscience and a consistent moral ethic.

...the Catholic school tries to create within its walls a climate in which the pupil's faith will gradually mature and enable him to assume the responsibility placed on him by Baptism. It will give pride of place in the education it provides through Christian

Doctrine to the gradual formation of conscience in fundamental, permanent virtues—above all the theological virtues, and charity in particular, which is, so to speak, the life-giving spirit which transforms a man of virtue into a man of Christ. Christ, therefore, is the teaching-centre, the Model on Whom the Christian shapes his life. In Him the Catholic school differs from all others which limit themselves to forming men. Its task is to form Christian men, and, by its teaching and witness, show non-Christians something of the mystery of Christ Who surpasses all human understanding.<sup>76</sup>

In an age of pluralism and relativism, the Catholic school holds out fundamental goods and teaches clearly about what is right and what is wrong.

Cultural pluralism, therefore, leads the Church to reaffirm her mission of education to insure strong character formation. Her children, then, will be capable both of resisting the debilitating influence of relativism and of living up to the demands made on them by their Baptism. It also stimulates her to foster truly Christian living and apostolic communities, equipped to make their own positive contribution, in a spirit of cooperation, to the building up of the secular society. For this reason the Church is prompted to mobilize her educational resources in the face of the materialism, pragmatism and technocracy of contemporary society.<sup>77</sup>

In forming the moral compass of our students based on Catholic truths, the school works closely with the student's primary educators, the parents.

Partnership between a Catholic school and the families of the students must continue and be strengthened: not simply to be able to deal with academic problems that may arise, but rather so that the educational goals of the school can be achieved. Close cooperation with the family is especially important when treating sensitive issues such as religious, moral, or sexual education, orientation toward a profession, or a choice of one's vocation in life. It is not a question of convenience, but a partnership based on faith. Catholic tradition teaches that God has bestowed on the family its own specific and unique educational mission.<sup>78</sup>

## Part 4 - Integral Formation Focused on Physical Development and Expression

The Catholic Church teaches there is an intimate unity between body and soul. We are incarnate beings whose physical lives and bodily expression should be in deep and natural accord with our souls and our spiritual life and dispositions. The Catholic school seeks to develop all these facets of the human person.

Since true education must strive for complete formation of the human person that looks to his or her final end as well as to the common good of societies, children and youth are to be nurtured in such a way that they are able to develop their physical, moral, and intellectual talents harmoniously, acquire a more perfect sense of responsibility and right use of freedom, and are formed to participate actively in social life.<sup>79</sup>

This understanding of the human person is based on a Christian anthropology which acknowledges our complete human nature, including our dignity and our brokenness:

Students should be helped to see the human person as a living creature having both a physical and a spiritual nature; each of us has an immortal soul, and we are in need of redemption. The older students can gradually come to a more mature understanding of all that is implied in the concept of “person”: intelligence and will, freedom and feelings, the capacity to be an active and creative agent; a being endowed with both rights and duties, capable of interpersonal relationships, called to a specific mission in the world.<sup>80</sup>

The human person is present in all the truths of faith: created in “the image and likeness” of God; elevated by God to the dignity of a child of God; unfaithful to God in original sin, but redeemed by Christ; a temple of the Holy Spirit; a member of the Church; destined to eternal life.<sup>81</sup>

It also means the cultivation of intellectual and spiritual gifts in a spirit of respect for oneself and others includes physical health and a life lived chastely.

Not a few young people, unable to find any meaning in life or trying to find an escape from loneliness, turn to alcohol, drugs, the

erotic, the exotic etc. Christian education is faced with the huge challenge of helping these young people discover something of value in their lives... We must cultivate intelligence and the other spiritual gifts, especially through scholastic work. We must learn to care for our body and its health, and this includes physical activity and sports. And we must be careful of our sexual integrity through the virtue of chastity, because sexual energies are also a gift of God, contributing to the perfection of the person and having a providential function for the life of society and of the Church. Thus, gradually, the teacher will guide students to the idea, and then to the realization, of a process of total formation.<sup>82</sup>

# Further Reflection on What the Church Teaches About Principle V - *Imparts a Christian Understanding of the World*

## Part 1- Traditions, Values, and Evangelization

The Church teaches that the task of a school is to provide,

fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life: the first is reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel; the second in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian.<sup>83</sup>

Both the current common culture and aspects of cultural history giving rise to it are to be explored and critically analyzed in the light of the Catholic faith. Positive elements that can be brought into harmony with the faith are to be celebrated and expanded. Elements appearing in contradiction to the faith are to be challenged and critically analyzed. This is a role to which Catholic schools are particularly suited.

A school uses its own specific means for the integral formation of the human person: the communication of culture...if the communication of culture is to be a genuine educational activity, it must not only be organic, but also critical and evaluative, historical and dynamic. Faith will provide Catholic educators with some essential principles for critique and evaluation; faith will help them to see all of human history as a history of salvation which culminates in the fullness of the Kingdom. This puts culture into a creative context, constantly being perfected.<sup>84</sup>

In addition to critically examining and transmitting those best elements of human culture in general, the school also embodies and imparts a specific Catholic culture: that has an integrated pattern of knowledge, values, beliefs, behaviors, and traditions that celebrate and pass on to a new generation the unique contributions of the Church in the arts and the intellectual life, enriching the social and

faith lives of our students with the great patrimony of the Catholic Church.

Catholic schools provide young people with sound Church teaching through a broad-based curriculum, where faith and culture are intertwined in all areas of a school's life. By equipping our young people with a sound education, rooted in the Gospel message, the Person of Jesus Christ, and rich in the cherished traditions and liturgical practices of our faith, we ensure that they have the foundation to live morally and uprightly in our complex modern world. This unique Catholic identity makes our Catholic elementary and secondary schools "schools for the human person" and allows them to fill a critical role in the future life of our Church, our country, and our world.<sup>85</sup>

Through this transmission of culture, students become Christ for others and work to evangelize others both inside and outside the school community.

The mission of the Catholic school is the integral formation of students, so that they may be true to their condition as Christ's disciples and as such work effectively for the evangelization of culture and for the common good of society.<sup>86</sup>

## **Part 2- Literature, History, and the Arts**

The school's curriculum is the vehicle for examining various cultural elements.

From the nature of the Catholic school also stems one of the most significant elements of its educational project: the synthesis between culture and faith. The endeavor to interweave reason and faith, which has become the heart of individual subjects, makes for unity, articulation, and coordination, bringing forth within what is learned in a school a Christian vision of the world, of life, of culture, and of history.<sup>87</sup>

A Catholic school curriculum examines issues of culture, meaning, faith, and value in the light of the Gospel. Literature, history, and the arts lend themselves readily to this enterprise.

Literature and the arts are also, in their own way, of great importance to the life of the Church. They strive to make known the proper nature of man, his problems and his experiences in trying to know and perfect both himself and the world. They have much to do with revealing man's place in history and in the world; with illustrating the miseries and joys, the needs and strengths of man and with foreshadowing a better life for him. Thus they are able to elevate human life, expressed in multifold forms according to various times and regions.<sup>88</sup>

Not only is history analyzed for its content and facts but also for its comportment to reality and truth. Catholic schools are free to discuss and unravel the numerous historical circumstances where God's hand is seen interjecting itself in temporal affairs. These opportunities are vast and plentiful and add an additional dimension to the study of historical timelines.

Teachers should guide the students' work in such a way that they will be able to discover a religious dimension in the world of human history. As a preliminary, they should be encouraged to develop a taste for historical truth, and therefore to realize the need to look critically at texts and curricula which, at times, are imposed by a government or distorted by the ideology of the author...they will see the development of civilizations, and learn about progress...When they are ready to appreciate it, students can be invited to reflect on the fact that this human struggle takes place within the divine history [of] universal salvation. At this moment, the religious dimension of history begins to shine forth in all its luminous grandeur.<sup>89</sup>

The study of human historical and social realities in a Catholic school occurs in the context of a permanent philosophical heritage which must be understood.

Every society has its own heritage of accumulated wisdom. Many people find inspiration in these philosophical and religious concepts which have endured for millennia. The systematic genius of classical Greek and European thought has, over the centuries, generated countless different doctrinal systems, but it has also given us

a set of truths which we can recognize as a part of our permanent philosophical heritage.<sup>90</sup>

This heritage includes a rich patrimony of social justice which should also be reflected in the curriculum.

The curriculum must help the students reflect on the great problems of our time, including those where one sees more clearly the difficult situation of a large part of humanity's living conditions. These would include the unequal distribution of resources, poverty, injustice and human rights denied.<sup>91</sup>

Especially in the arts, both auditory and visual, Catholic schools have a rich tradition to draw from for discussions of beauty and harmony and that fulfills a human soul.

Literary and artistic works depict the struggles of societies, of families, and of individuals. They spring from the depths of the human heart, revealing its lights and its shadows, its hope and its despair. The Christian perspective goes beyond the merely human, and offers more penetrating criteria for understanding the human struggle and the mysteries of the human spirit. Furthermore, an adequate religious formation has been the starting point for the vocation of a number of Christian artists and art critics. In the upper grades, a teacher can bring students to: an even more profound appreciation of artistic works: as a reflection of the divine beauty in tangible form. Both the Fathers of the Church and the masters of Christian philosophy teach this in their writings on aesthetics—St. Augustine invites us to go beyond the intention of the artists in order to find the eternal order of God in the work of art; St. Thomas sees the presence of the Divine Word in art.<sup>92</sup>

### **Part 3 - Science and Mathematics**

The school's science and math curriculum is the vehicle not just for examining standard scientific content found in non-Catholic schools, but also for introducing students to the Catholic intellectual tradition as well as the specific contributions of Catholics to the world of math and science. It can help the students see the limitations of materialism and open them up to the depths of wonder held in God's creation.



The Catholic school should teach its pupils to discern in the voice of the universe the Creator Whom it reveals and, in the conquests of science, to know God and man better.<sup>93</sup>

### By not ignoring the religious dimension, Catholic schools

...help their students to understand that positive science, and the technology allied to it, is a part of the universe created by God. Understanding this can help encourage an interest in research: the whole of creation, from the distant celestial bodies and the immeasurable cosmic forces down to the infinitesimal particles and waves of matter and energy, all bear the imprint of the Creator's wisdom and power. The wonder that past ages felt when contemplating this universe, recorded by the Biblical authors, is still valid for the students of today; the only difference is that we have a knowledge that is much more vast and profound. There can be no conflict between faith and true scientific knowledge; both find their source in God. The student who is able to discover the harmony between faith and science will, in future professional life, be better able to put science and technology to the service of men and women, and to the service of God. It is a way of giving back to God what he has first given to us.<sup>94</sup>

### Education in science includes the relationship of science to other disciplines in the life of the intellect.

Furthermore, when man gives himself to the various disciplines of philosophy, history and of mathematical and natural science, and when he cultivates the arts, he can do very much to elevate the human family to a more sublime understanding of truth, goodness, and beauty, and to the formation of considered opinions which have universal value. Thus mankind may be more clearly enlightened by that marvelous Wisdom which was with God from all eternity, composing all things with him, rejoicing in the earth and delighting in the sons of men. In this way, the human spirit, being less subjected to material things, can be more easily drawn to the worship and contemplation of the Creator. Moreover, by the impulse of grace, he is disposed to acknowledge the Word of God, Who before He became flesh in order to save all and to sum up all in Himself was already "in the world" as "the true light which

enlightens every man” (John 1:9-10). Indeed today’s progress in science and technology can foster a certain exclusive emphasis on observable data, and agnosticism about everything else. For the methods of investigation which these sciences use can be wrongly considered as the supreme rule of seeking the whole truth. By virtue of their methods these sciences cannot penetrate to the intimate notion of things. Indeed the danger is present that man, confiding too much in the discoveries of today, may think that he is sufficient unto himself and no longer seek the higher things.<sup>95</sup>

This notion is in line with the Catholic intellectual tradition in which

Catholic schools strive to relate all of the sciences to salvation and sanctification. Students are shown how Jesus illumines all of life—science, mathematics, history, business, biology, and so forth.<sup>96</sup>

As God is the source of all reality and because all things live, move, and have their being in Him, an understanding of all aspects of creation can assist in understanding and glorifying God in whom all truths converge.

## Notes

- 1 Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School* (Vatican City, 1977) 5-7; Pope Paul VI, *Gravissimum Educationis* (Vatican City, 1965) 2; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *To Teach as Jesus Did* (Washington, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1972) 7.
- 2 Matthew 28:19-20.
- 3 Pope Benedict XVI, Meeting with Catholic Educators: Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI (Washington, April 2008); Pope Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi* (Vatican City, 2007) 4.
- 4 *The Catholic School* (1977) 34; Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion* (Vatican, 2014) III.
- 5 Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (Vatican City, 1988) 25.
- 6 Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission Between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful* (Vatican City, 2007) 5, 10; *The Religious Dimension of Education* 44.
- 7 *The Catholic School* (1977) 49.
- 8 Canon Law Society of America, *Code of Canon Law* (Washington, D.C., 1983) 795; *Gravissimum Educationis*, Introduction; Congregation for Catholic Education, *Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education in Schools* (Vatican City, 2009) 1.
- 9 *The Catholic School* (1977) 54.
- 10 *Educating Together* 10, 12-14.
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- 12 *Lay Catholics in Schools* 22; *The Catholic School* (1977) 53; *The Religious Dimension of Education* 34.
- 13 *Educating Together* 50; *The Religious Dimension of Education* 44.
- 14 *Educating Together* 5; Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in the Catholic School: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love* (Vatican, 2013) 86; *Lay Catholics in Schools* 18; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium* (Washington, D.C., 2005) excerpt.
- 15 *The Religious Dimension of Education* 26, 28.
- 16 *The Religious Dimension of Education* 25-26, 28-29, 40; *Educating Together* 48.
- 17 *Code of Canon Law* 795; *To Teach as Jesus Did* 107; *The Religious Dimension of Education* 39; *Educating Today and Tomorrow*, conclusion.
- 18 *Gravissimum Educationis* 5, 8; *Code of Canon Law* 803§2; *To Teach as Jesus Did* 104.

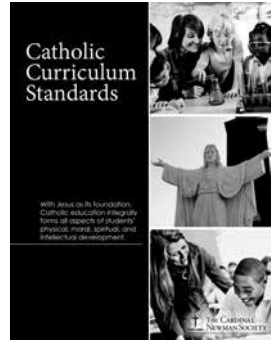
- 19 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, National Directory for Catechesis (Washington D.C., 2005) 231-233; Congregation for Catholic Education, The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium (Vatican, 1997) 19.
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- 28 The Religious Dimension of Education 51, 63; Educating in Intercultural Dialogue 64-67; The Catholic School (1977) 37; Lay Catholics in Schools 56; Educating Together 24.
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- 31 The Religious Dimension of Education 49.
- 32 Lay Catholics in Schools 12; The Catholic School (1977) 26, 36; The Religious Dimension of Education 108.
- 33 The Catholic School (1977) 15, 49; The Religious Dimension of Education 34, 51, 52.
- 34 The Catholic School on the Threshold 14; The Religious Dimension of Education 53, 100; *Gravissimum Educationis* 8.
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- 37 Pope Saint John Paul II (1998); *Renewing Our Commitment*, excerpt; Educating Today and Tomorrow II-1.
38. *Gravissimum Educationis* 2.
39. To Teach as Jesus Did 7.
40. The Catholic School (1977) 34.
41. The Religious Dimension of Education 25.
42. Pope Benedict XVI, Meeting With Catholic Educators.

43. The Religious Dimension of Education 1.
44. Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences 1.
45. The Catholic School (1977) 8-9.
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50. The Religious Dimension of Education 103.
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55. Lay Catholics in Schools 32.
56. Code of Canon Law, 803, § 2.
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88. Gaudium et Spes 62.
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# Other Resources from The Cardinal Newman Society

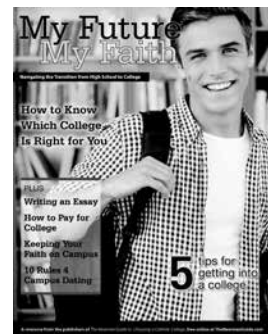
**Catholic Curriculum Standards** help keep focus on what is unique about Catholic elementary and secondary education: its evangelizing mission to integrally form students in Christ and transmit a Christian worldview. The standards cover English language arts, math, scientific topics, and history, focusing on unique Catholic insights into these curricular areas and complementing the Church's standards for religious instruction.



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Principles of Catholic Identity

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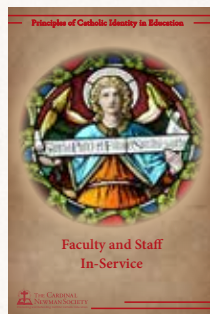
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