

The Nature, Mission and Identity of Catholic Schools: Selections from Church Documents on Education



CENTER FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Inspired by a supernatural vision	Founded on Christian anthropology	Animated by communion and community	Imbued with a Catholic worldview throughout the curriculum	Sustained by Gospel witness
<p>No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth. But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through baptism as they develop their own personalities, and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and man is illumined by faith. - <i>Declaration on Christian Education, #8</i></p>	<p>For a true education aims at the formation of the human person in pursuit of his ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share. - <i>Declaration on Christian Education, #1</i></p>	<p>But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity... - <i>Declaration on Christian Education, #8</i></p>	<p>Among all educational instruments the school has a special importance.(19) It is designed not only to develop with special care the intellectual faculties but also to form the ability to judge rightly, to hand on the cultural legacy of previous generations, to foster a sense of values, to prepare for professional life. Between pupils of different talents and backgrounds it promotes friendly relations and fosters a spirit of mutual understanding; and it establishes as it were a center whose work and progress must be shared together by families, teachers, associations of various types that foster cultural, civic, and religious life, as well as by civil society and the entire human community. <i>Declaration on Christian Education, #5</i></p>	<p>Beautiful indeed and of great importance is the vocation of all those who aid parents in fulfilling their duties and who, as representatives of the human community, undertake the task of education in schools. This vocation demands special qualities of mind and heart, very careful preparation, and continuing readiness to renew and to adapt. - <i>Declaration on Christian Education, #5</i></p>
	<p>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 centre in which a specific concept of the world, of man, and of history is developed and conveyed. <i>The Catholic School, #8</i></p>	<p>By its very nature, the Catholic school requires the presence and involvement of educators that are not only culturally and spiritually formed, but also intentionally directed at developing their community educational commitment in an authentic spirit of ecclesial communion. <i>Educating Together in Catholic Schools, #34</i></p>		<p>Canon #803 §2. The instruction and education in a Catholic school must be grounded in the principles of Catholic doctrine; teachers are to be outstanding in correct doctrine and integrity of life.</p>
<p>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"; <i>The Catholic School, #34</i></p>	<p>For this reason the Catholic school, in committing itself to the development of the whole man, does so in obedience to the solicitude of the Church, in the awareness that all human values find their fulfillment and unity in Christ. This awareness expresses the centrality of the human person in the educational project of the Catholic school, strengthens its educational endeavor and renders it fit to form strong personalities. <i>The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, #9</i></p>	<p>...a school is not only a place where one is given a choice of intellectual values, but a place where one has presented an array of values which are actively lived. 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. -<i>The Catholic School, #32</i></p>	<p>These premises indicate the duties and the content of the Catholic school. Its task is 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. <i>The Catholic School, #37</i></p>	<p>But let teachers recognize that the Catholic school depends upon them almost entirely for the accomplishment of its goals and programs. They should therefore be very carefully prepared so that both in secular and religious knowledge they are equipped with suitable qualifications and also with a pedagogical skill that is in keeping with the findings of the contemporary world. Intimately linked in charity to one another and to their students and endowed with an apostolic spirit, may teachers by their life as much as by their instruction bear witness to Christ, the unique Teacher. <i>Declaration on Christian Education, #8</i></p>
<p>The Council, therefore, declared that what makes the Catholic school distinctive is its religious dimension, and that this is to be found in <i>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.</i> -<i>The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, #1</i></p>	<p>The Catholic school is committed thus to the development of the whole man, since in Christ, the Perfect Man, all human values find their fulfillment and unity. Herein lies the specifically Catholic character of the school. <i>The Catholic School, #35</i></p>	<p>The model that school structures must take as their inspiration is the <i>educating community</i>, a place of differences living together in harmony. The school community is a place for encounter and promoting participation. <i>Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love, #58</i></p>	<p>A Catholic school must be committed to the development of a program which will overcome the problems of a fragmented and insufficient curriculum. -<i>The Religious Dimensions of Education in a Catholic School, #55</i></p>	

"A school's mission is to develop the sense of the true, the sense of the good, the sense of the beautiful." - Pope Francis, 10 May 2014

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<p>This is the basis of a Catholic school's educational work. Education is not given for the purpose of gaining power but as an aid towards a fuller understanding of, and communion with man, events and things. Knowledge is not to be considered as a means of material prosperity and success, but as a call to serve and to be responsible for others. -The Catholic School, #78</p>	<p>The integral formation of the human person, which is the purpose of education, includes the development of all the human faculties of the students, together with preparation for professional life, formation of ethical and social awareness, becoming aware of the transcendental and religious education. Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, #17</p>	<p>The Catholic school, characterized mainly as an educating community, is a school for the <i>person and of persons</i>. In fact, it aims at forming the <i>person in the integral unity of his being</i>, using the tools of teaching and learning where “criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life”]are formed. Above all, they are involved in the dynamics of interpersonal relations that form and vivify the school community. -Educating Together in Catholic Schools, #13</p>	<p>The increased attention given to science and technology must not lead to a neglect of the humanities: philosophy, history, literature and art. Since earliest times, each society has developed and handed on its artistic and literary heritage, and our human patrimony is nothing more than the sum total of this cultural wealth... The artistic and literary patrimony of Christianity is vast and gives visible testimony to a faith that has been handed down through centuries. Religious Dimensions of Education in a Catholic School, #60</p>	<p>Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness.- On Evangelization in the Modern World, #21</p> <p>By their witness and their behavior teachers are of the first importance to impart a distinctive character to Catholic schools. -The Catholic School, #78</p>
<p>While the Catholic school is like any other school in this complex variety of events that make up the life of the school, there is one essential difference: it draws its inspiration and its strength from the Gospel in which it is rooted. The principle that no human act is morally indifferent to one's conscience or before God has clear applications to school life: examples of it are school work accepted as a duty and done with good will; courage and perseverance when difficulties come; respect for teachers; loyalty toward and love for fellow students; sincerity, tolerance, and goodness in all relationships. -The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, #47</p>	<p>Every human being is called to communion because of his nature which is created in the image and likeness of God (cf. <i>Gen 1:26-27</i>). Therefore, within the sphere of biblical anthropology, man is not an isolated individual, but a <i>person</i>: a being who is essentially relational. The communion to which man is called always involves a double dimension, that is to say vertical (communion with God) and horizontal (communion with people). - Educating Together in Catholic Schools, #8</p>	<p>It is also helpful to bear in mind, in harmony with the Second Vatican Council,(23) that this community dimension in the Catholic school is not a merely sociological category; it has a theological foundation as well. The educating community, taken as a whole, is thus called to further the objective of a school as a place of complete formation through interpersonal relations. -The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, #18</p>	<p>Individual subjects must be taught according to their own particular methods. It would be wrong to consider subjects as mere adjuncts to faith or as a useful means of teaching apologetics. They enable the pupil to assimilate skills, knowledge, intellectual methods and moral and social attitudes, all of which help to develop his personality and lead him to take his place as an active member of the community of man. Their aim is not merely the attainment of knowledge but the acquisition of values and the discovery of truth. -The Catholic School, #39</p>	<p>Most of all, students should be able to recognize authentic human qualities in their teachers. They are teachers of the faith; however, like Christ, they must also be teachers of what it means to be human. - Religious Dimensions of Education in a Catholic School, #96</p> <p>For the Catholic educator, whatever is true is a participation in Him who is the Truth; the communication of truth, therefore, as a professional activity, is thus fundamentally transformed into a unique participation in the prophetic mission of Christ, carried on through one's teaching. -Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, #16</p>
<p>If, like every other school, the Catholic school has as its aim the critical communication of human culture and the total formation of the individual, it works towards this goal guided by its Christian vision of reality "through which our cultural heritage acquires its special place in the total vocational life of man. -The Catholic School, 36</p>	<p>School can and must be a catalyst, it must be a place of encounter and convergence of the entire educating community, with the sole objective of training and helping to develop mature people who are simple, competent and honest, who know how to love with fidelity, who can live life as a response to God's call, and their future profession as a service to society. -Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love, conclusion</p>	<p>The educational mission is carried out in a spirit of cooperation between various subjects – students, parents, teachers, non-teaching personnel and the school management – who form the educational community. It can create an environment for living in which the values are mediated by authentic interpersonal relations between the various members of which it is composed. Its highest aim is the complete and comprehensive education of the person. - Consecrated Person and their Mission in Schools, #41</p>	<p>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. Religious Dimensions of Education in a Catholic School, #61</p>	<p>Note: The 5 dimensions which comprise the concept of “Catholic Identity” used in used in this chart are those formulated by Archbishops J. Michael Miller, C.S.B. in his work The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools, published for the Solidarity Association by Sophia Institute</p>