

Catholic Identity across the Curriculum: An Overview from the Documents of the Church on Catholic Education

Developed by



CENTER FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

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Catholic Identity

The 5 dimensions which comprise the concept of "Catholic Identity" 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. 2006

Inspired by a supernatural vision

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"; **The Catholic School, # 34**

Founded on Christian anthropology

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**

Animated by communion and community

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**

Imbued with a Catholic worldview throughout the curriculum

Its [The Catholic school's] 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. **The Catholic School, #37**

Sustained by Gospel Witness

By their witness and their behavior teachers are of the first importance to impart a distinctive character to Catholic schools. -**The Catholic School, #78**

Curriculum in the Catholic School

The curriculum is how the school community makes explicit its goals and objectives, the content of its teaching and the means for communicating it effectively.
Educating for Intercultural Dialogue #64

What is taught

The various school subjects do not present only knowledge to be attained, but also values to be acquired and truths to be discovered. - *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, #14*

In what context it is taught

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. - *Declaration on Christian Education, #8*

How it is taught

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*

To whom it is taught

The Catholic school sets out to be a school for the human person and of human persons. The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ's teaching: this is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school. This affirmation, stressing man's vital relationship with Christ, reminds us that it is in His person that the fullness of the truth concerning man is to be found. 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 fulfilment and unity in Christ.. -*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium. #9*

By whom it is taught

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. *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, #96*
Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses. -*Evangelii Nuntiandi, #41*

For what purpose

The synthesis between faith, culture and life that educators of the Catholic school are called to achieve is, in fact, reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel [...and] in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian. -*Educating Together in Catholic Schools, #24*
For a true education aims at the formation of the human person in the 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. - *Declaration on Christian Education, #1*



Catholic Identity across the Curriculum

Educational Goals of the Catholic School

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, #100

The responsibility of a Catholic school is enormous and complex. It must respect and obey the laws that define methods, programs, structure, etc., and at the same time it must fulfill its own educational goals by blending human culture with the message of salvation into a coordinated program; it must help each of the students to actually become the "new creature" that each one is potentially, and at the same time prepare them for the responsibilities of an adult member of society. This means that a Catholic school needs to have a set of educational goals which are "distinctive" in the sense that the school has a specific objective in mind, and all of the goals are related to this objective. Concretely, the educational goals provide a frame of reference which:

defines the school's identity: in particular, the Gospel values which are its inspiration must be explicitly mentioned

gives a precise description of the pedagogical, educational and cultural aims of the school

presents the course content, along with the values that are to be transmitted through these courses

describes the organization and the management of the school

determines which policy decisions are to be reserved to professional staff (governors and teachers), which policies are to be developed with the help of parents and students, and which activities are to be left to the free initiative of teachers, parents, or students

indicates the ways in which student progress is to be tested and evaluated

Curricular Principles in the Catholic School

Therefore children and young people must be helped, with the aid of the latest advances in psychology and the arts and science of teaching, to develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual endowments so that they may gradually acquire a mature sense of responsibility in striving endlessly to form their own lives properly and in pursuing true freedom as they surmount the vicissitudes of life with courage and constancy. - ***The Declaration on Christian Education, #1***

A Catholic school must be committed to the development of a program which will overcome the problems of a fragmented and insufficient curriculum. Teachers dealing with areas such as anthropology, biology, psychology, sociology and philosophy all have the opportunity to present a complete picture of the human person, including the religious dimension. 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 Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School...#55***

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 learnt in school a Christian vision of the world, of life, of culture and of history. 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 Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, # 14***

Catholic schools think out their curricula to place center-stage both individuals and their search for meaning. This is the reference value, in view of which the various academic disciplines are important resources and take on greater value to the extent that they are tools for educating. From this perspective, what is taught is not neutral, and neither is the way of teaching it. ***Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love, #65***

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, #56***

Specific Curricular Areas:

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School

#58 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. The next step is to help students see history as something real: the drama of human grandeur and human misery.

#60: The increased attention given to science and technology must not lead to a neglect of the humanities: philosophy, history, literature and art.

#76: Students learn many things about the human person by studying science; but science has nothing to say about mystery. Teachers should help students begin to discover the mystery within the human person...

#60: 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. Thus, while teachers are helping students to develop an aesthetic sense, they can bring them to a deeper awareness of all peoples as one great human family. The simplest way to uncover the religious dimension of the artistic and literary world is to start with its concrete expressions: in every human culture, art and literature have been closely linked to religious beliefs. The artistic and literary patrimony of Christianity is vast and gives visible testimony to a faith that has been handed down through centuries.

#61: 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.

#64: Interdisciplinary work has been introduced into Catholic schools with positive results, for there are questions and topics that are not easily treated within the limitations of a single subject area. Religious themes should be included; they arise naturally when dealing with topics such as the human person, the family, society, or history. Teachers should be adequately prepared to deal with such questions and be ready to give them the attention they deserve.

#88: Christian social ethics must always be founded on faith. From this starting point it can shed light on related disciplines such as law, economics and political science, all of which study the human situation, and this is an obvious area for fruitful interdisciplinary study.