



CENTER FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Note: The following quotations focus on the topic of *Community and the Catholic School* as it is contained in the documents of the Church which consider education. The following conditions and recommendations apply:

- ❖ The purpose of this selection is to give a sample of the topic. It is not intended to replace the reading of the entire document(s) cited.
- ❖ In-text citations are not included in this document. The document can be accessed in its entirety for this purpose. The paragraph numbers give the exact location of the quotation within the pertinent document.
- ❖ In a few instances spelling has been changed to reflect common usage and for the purpose of clarity. (“program” instead of “programme,” for example).
- ❖ The sections included are only examples and are not necessarily the only references on this topic contained in the document(s).

Community and the Catholic School

Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis), #8 **Vatican Council II, 1965.**

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.

The Catholic School, #32

Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977.

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.

The Catholic School, # 53

Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977.

The Catholic school, far more than any other, must be a community whose aim is the transmission of values for living. Its work is seen as promoting a faith-relationship with Christ in Whom all values find fulfillment. But faith is principally assimilated through contact with people whose daily life bears witness to it. Christian faith, in fact, is born and grows inside a community.

The Catholic School, # 54

Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977.

The community aspect of the Catholic school is necessary because of the nature of the faith and not simply because of the nature of man and the nature of the educational process which is common to every school.

The Catholic School, # 54

Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977.

"This simple religious doctrine is the cornerstone of the existential, Christian metaphysic." 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, # 60

Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977.

From the outset the Catholic school declares its program and its determination to uphold it. It is a genuine community bent on imparting, over and above an academic education, all the help it can to its members to adopt a Christian way of life. For the Catholic school mutual respect means service to the Person of Christ. Cooperation is between brothers and sisters in Christ. A policy of working for the common good is undertaken seriously as working for the building up of the Kingdom of God.***The Catholic School, # 61***

Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977.

The cooperation required for the realization of this aim is a duty in conscience for all the members of the community teachers, parents, pupils, administrative personnel. Each has his or her own part to play. Cooperation of all, given in the spirit of the Gospel, is by its very nature a witness not only to Christ as the corner-stone of the community, but also as the light Who shines far beyond it.

The Catholic School, # 62

Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977.

Today especially one sees a world which clamors for solidarity and yet experiences the rise of new forms of individualism. Society can take note from the Catholic school that it is possible to create true communities out of a common effort for the common good.

Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, #22.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982.

Everything that the Catholic educator does in a school takes place within the structure of an educational community, made up of the contacts and the collaboration among all of the various groups - students, parents, teachers, directors, non-teaching staff - that together are responsible for making the school an instrument for integral formation. Although it is not exhaustive, this concept of the scholarly institution as an educational community, together with a more widespread awareness of this concept, is one of the most enriching developments for the contemporary school. The Catholic educator exercises his or her profession as a member of one of the constitutive elements of this community. The professional structure itself offers an excellent opportunity to live - and bring to life in the students the communitarian dimension of the human person. Every human being is called to live in a community, as a social being, and as a member of the People of God.

Therefore, the educational community of a school is itself a " school ". It teaches one how to be a member of the wider social communities; and when the educational community is at the same time a Christian community - and this is what the educational community of a Catholic school must always be striving toward - then it offers a great opportunity for the teachers to provide the students with a living example of what it means to be a member of that great community which is the Church.

Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, #38.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982.

The distinctive feature of the Catholic school is " to create for the school community an atmosphere enlivened by the gospel spirit of freedom and charity. It aims to help the adolescent in such a way that the development of his or her own personality will be matched by the growth of that new creation which he or she becomes by baptism. It strives to relate all human culture eventually to the news of salvation, so that the light of faith will illumine the knowledge which students gradually gain of the world, of life and of the human race." From all this, it is obvious that the Catholic school " fully enters into the salvific mission of the Church, especially in the need for education in the faith."

and involves a sincere adherence to the Magisterium of the Church, a presentation of Christ as the supreme model of the human person, and a special care for the quality of the religious education in the school.

Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, #41.
Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982.

The educational community of a Catholic school should be trying to become a Christian community: a genuine community of faith.

Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, #44.
Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982.

If each vocation has its own distinct characteristics, then all should be aware of the fact that a mutual and complementary presence will be a great help in ensuring the character of the Catholic school.

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal, #1.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.

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 Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal, #31.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.

The declaration *Gravissimum Educationis* notes an important advance in the way a Catholic school is thought of: the transition from the school as an institution to the school as a community

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal, #32.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.

Everyone directly involved in the school is a part of the school community: teachers, directors, administrative and auxiliary staff. Parents are central figures, since they are the natural and irreplaceable agents in the education of their children. And the community also includes the students, since they must be active agents in their own education.

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal, #39.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.

Achieving the educational aims of the school should be an equal priority for teachers, students and families alike, each one according to his or her own role, always in the Gospel spirit of freedom and love. Therefore channels of communication should be open among all those concerned with the school.

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal, #44.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.

It recognizes the Holy Father as the centre and the measure of unity in the entire Christian community. Love for and fidelity to the Church is the organizing principle and the source of strength of a Catholic school. Teachers find the light and the courage for authentic Religious education in their unity among themselves and their generous and humble communion with the Holy Father.

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal, #45.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.

The school life should also reflect an awareness of international society. Christian education sees all of humanity as one large family,

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal, #103.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.

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.

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal, #112.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.

Thus a relationship is built up which is both human and divine; there is a flow of love, and also of grace. And this will make the Catholic school truly authentic. As the years go by, students will have the joy of seeing themselves nearing maturity; not only physically, but also intellectually and spiritually. When they look back, they will realize that, with their cooperation, the educational objectives of the school have become a reality. And as they look forward, they will feel free and secure, because they will be able to face the new, and now proximate, life commitments.

The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, #9.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997.

By reason of its identity, therefore, the Catholic school is a place of ecclesial experience, which is molded in the Christian community

The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 11.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997.

The ecclesial nature of the Catholic school, therefore, is written in the very heart of its identity as a teaching institution. It is a true and proper ecclesial entity by reason of its educational activity, "in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony".(11) Thus it must be strongly emphasized that this ecclesial dimension is not a mere adjunct, but is a proper and specific attribute, a distinctive characteristic which penetrates and informs every moment of its educational activity, a fundamental part of its very identity and the focus of its mission.(12) The fostering of this dimension should be the aim of all those who make up the educating community.

The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, #12.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997.

By reason of its identity, therefore, the Catholic school is a place of ecclesial experience, which is molded in the Christian community. However, it should not be forgotten that the school fulfils its vocation to be a genuine experience of Church only if it takes its stand within the organic pastoral work of the Christian community

The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, #18.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997.

Before concluding, we should like to dwell briefly on the climate and role of the educating community, which is constituted by the interaction and collaboration of its various components: students, parents, teachers, directors and non-teaching staff. Attention is rightly given to the importance of the relations existing between all those who make up the educating community. During childhood and adolescence a student needs to experience personal relations with outstanding educators, and what is taught has greater influence on the student's formation when placed in a context of personal involvement, genuine reciprocity, coherence of attitudes, life-styles and day to day behavior. While respecting individual roles, the community dimension should be fostered, since it is one of the most enriching developments for the contemporary school. It is also helpful to bear in mind, in harmony with the Second Vatican Council, 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.

Consecrated Person and their Mission in Schools: Reflections and Guidelines, #17.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 2003.

Whatever the specific charism that characterizes them, consecrated persons are called, through their vocations, to be *experts of communion*, to promote human and spiritual bonds that promote the mutual exchange of gifts between all the members of the people of God. The acknowledgement of the *many forms* of vocations in the Church gives a new

meaning to the presence of consecrated persons in the field of scholastic education. For them a school is a place of mission, where the prophetic role conferred by baptism and lived according to the requirements of the radicalism typical of the evangelical counsels is fulfilled. The gift of special consecration that they have received will lead them to recognizing in schools and in the educational commitment the fruitful furrow in which the Kingdom of God can grow and bear fruit.

Consecrated Person and their Mission in Schools: Reflections and Guidelines, #29.
Congregation for Catholic Education, 2003.

A profile of consecrated persons clearly shows how their educational commitment in schools is suited to the nature of the consecrated life. In fact "thanks to their experience of the particular gifts of the Spirit, their careful listening to the Word, their constant practice of discernment and their rich heritage of pedagogical traditions amassed since the establishment of their Institutes...consecrated persons give life to educational undertakings" _in the educational cultural commitment which seeks to raise the level of personal preparation, and on the other of a constant conversion to follow Jesus, *the way, the truth and the life* (cf. *Jn 14:6*). It is an uncomfortable and tiring road that does however make it possible to take up the challenges of the present time and undertake the educational mission entrusted to the Church. While aware that it cannot be exhaustive, the Congregation for Catholic Education, intends pausing to consider just some elements of this mission. In particular it wishes to reflect on three specific contributions of the presence of consecrated persons to scholastic education: first of all the link of education to evangelization; then formation to "vertical" relationism, that is to the opening to God and lastly formation to "horizontal" relationism, that is to say to welcoming the other and to living together.

Consecrated Person and their Mission in Schools: Reflections and Guidelines, #41.
Congregation for Catholic Education, 2003.

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. In this respect, consecrated persons can offer a decisive contribution, in the light of their experience of communion that characterizes their community lives. In fact, by committing themselves to live and communicate the spirituality of communion in the school community, through a dialogue that is constructive and able to harmonize differences, they build an environment that is rooted in the evangelical values of truth and love. Consecrated persons are thus leaven that is able to create relations of increasingly deep communion that are in themselves educational. They promote solidarity, mutual enhancement and joint responsibility in the educational plan, and, above all, they give an explicit Christian testimony, through communication of the experience of God and of the evangelical message, even sharing the awareness of being instruments of God and bearers of a charism in the service of all men.

Consecrated Person and their Mission in Schools: Reflections and Guidelines, #46.
Congregation for Catholic Education, 2003.

Due to their experience of community life, consecrated persons are in a most favourable position for cooperating to make the educational plan of the school promote the creation of a true community. In particular they propose an alternative model of coexistence to that of a standardized or individualistic society. In actual fact consecrated persons undertake, together with their lay colleagues, to assure that schools are structured as places of encounter, listening, communication, where students experience values in an essential way. They help, in a directed way, to guide pedagogical choices to promote overcoming individualistic self-promotion, solidarity instead of competition, assisting the weak instead of marginalization, (sic) responsible participation instead of indifference.

Consecrated Person and their Mission in Schools: Reflections and Guidelines, #54.
Congregation for Catholic Education, 2003.

In Catholic schools, teaching of religion must help students to arrive at a personal position in religious matters that is consistent and respectful of the positions of others, so contributing to their growth and to a more complete understanding of reality. It is important that the whole educational community, especially in Catholic schools, recognizes the value and role of the teaching of religion and contributes to its enhancement by the students. By using words that are suited to mediating the religious message, the religion teacher is called to stimulate the pupils to study the great questions concerning the meaning of life, the significance of reality and a responsible commitment to transform it in the light of the evangelical values and modern culture. The community of a Catholic school offers not only teaching of religion but also other opportunities, other moments and ways for educating to a harmony between faith and culture, faith and life.

Consecrated Person and their Mission in Schools: Reflections and Guidelines, #60.
Congregation for Catholic Education, 2003.

A school's community dimension is inseparable from priority attention to the person, the focus of the scholastic educational program. "Culture must correspond to the human person, and overcome the temptation to a knowledge which yields to pragmatism or which loses itself in the endless meanderings of erudition. Such knowledge is incapable of giving meaning to life...knowledge enlightened by faith, far from abandoning areas of daily life, invests them with all the strength of hope and prophecy. The humanism which we desire advocates a vision of society centered on the human person and his inalienable rights, on the values of justice and peace, on a correct relationship between individuals, society and the State, on the logic of solidarity and subsidiarity. It is a humanism capable of giving a soul to economic progress itself, so that it may be directed to the promotion of each individual and of the whole person.

Consecrated Person and their Mission in Schools: Reflections and Guidelines, #62.
Congregation for Catholic Education, 2003. With the typical sensitivity of their formation, consecrated persons offer personalized accompanying through attentive listening and dialogue. They are, in fact, convinced that "education is a thing of the heart" [\[xliv\]](#) and that, consequently, an authentic formative process can only be initiated through a personal relationship.

Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful, #2.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007.

As well as gaining knowledge, students must also have a strong experience of sharing with their educators,

Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful, #5.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007.

The implementation of a real educational community, built on the foundation of shared projected values, represents a serious task that must be carried out by the Catholic school.

Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful, #7.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007.

It wishes to call attention to three fundamental aspects of cooperation between lay faithful and consecrated persons in the Catholic school: communion in the educational mission, the necessary course of formation for communion for a shared educational mission and, lastly, openness towards others as the fruit of that communion.

Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful, #8.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007.

Every human being is called to communion because of his nature which is created in the image and likeness of God (cf. *Gen 1:26-27*). Therefore, within the sphere of biblical anthropology, man is not an isolated individual, but a *person*: 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: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful, #12

Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007.

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

Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful, #13

Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007.

The Catholic school, characterized mainly as an educating community, is a school for the *person and of persons*. In fact, it aims at forming the *person in the integral unity of his being*, 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: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful, #34

Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007.

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.

Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful, #48

Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007.

It is precisely because of this that the educational community identifies the decisive space for cooperation between school and family in the *educational project*, to be made known and implemented with a spirit of communion, through the contribution of everyone, discerning responsibilities, roles and competences. Parents in particular are required to enrich the communion around this project, making the family climate that must characterize the educating community more alive and explicit. For this reason, in willingly welcoming parents' cooperation, Catholic schools consider essential to their mission the service of *permanent formation offered to families*, to support them in their educating task and to develop an increasingly closer bond between the values proposed by the school and those proposed by the family.

Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love, #58

Congregation for Catholic Education, 2013.

The model that school structures must take as their inspiration is the *educating community*, a place of differences living together in harmony.[57] The school community is a place for encounter and promoting participation. It dialogues with the family, which is the primary community to which the students that attend school belong. The school must respect the family's culture. It must listen carefully to the needs that it finds and the expectations that are directed towards it. In this way, the school can be considered a true experience of intercultural relationships, lived out rather than just spoken about.