

RENEWING CHRISTIAN WITNESS:

REFLECTIONS ON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AS INSTRUMENTS OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. Mk 16:15

The New Evangelization calls the Church to spread the Gospel with new energy—to bring the joy of the Good News of Jesus Christ to a world in desperate need of authentic hope. At its heart, the New Evangelization invites an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to enliven the Church—especially in the young. The New Evangelization emanates from the ancient and apostolic faith of the Church, yet aims to reinvigorate this tradition by finding fresh, imaginative, and effective ways to help people hear and respond to the Gospel.

Catholic schools are at the very heart of the New Evangelization. They are instruments of grace, sacred places where the Gospel comes alive daily—and where children and families encounter (and, not infrequently, re-engage) the faith. In *Educating Together in Catholic Schools*, the Congregation for Catholic Education identified the fundamental aim of the Catholic school as one of “forming the person in the integral unity of his being.” In response to this call, Catholic schools in the United States shine forth

as beacons of hope in our increasingly secular culture. More than ever we need strong Catholic schools, perhaps our most effective means to bring families and children to completeness in the image of Jesus Christ.

As the recent Synod of Bishops articulated: “*If evangelization is to be true to itself, it cannot take place apart from education; it is directly related to it.*” Can we imagine a more vibrant and authentic context for this work than the Church’s K-12 Catholic schools, where God’s love and truth inform all learning?

The USCCB Committee on Catholic Education has assembled succinct reflections on the vital role Catholic schools can and must play for the New Evangelization to thrive in the United States. We hope that these words promote prayerful contemplation on how we might each renew our zeal to strengthen and transform this extraordinary apostolate.





The education of children and young people is such an important task
in forming them as free and responsible human beings.
It affirms their dignity as an inalienable gift that flows from
our original creation as children made in the image and likeness of God.
And because education truly forms human beings, it is especially the duty and responsibility of the Church,
who is called to serve mankind from the heart of God and in such a way that no other institution can.

Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio (Pope Francis)

It is no exaggeration to say that providing young people with a sound education in the faith represents the most urgent
internal challenge facing the Catholic community in your country.

I believe our Catholic schools are a ‘pearl of great price’ worth every drop of sweat and ounce of effort that we are
making on their behalf. At a time when even public
schools across the country are struggling, we Catholic
educators need to be bold in our thinking and daring in
our actions as we look to the future.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan
Archbishop of New York

Christ the Teacher is indeed present in all our Catholic
schools, where students learn to be disciples—Jesus’
friends—and then learn to be evangelists who witness to
his truth and love.

Cardinal Donald Wuerl
Archbishop of Washington, DC

In a national environment that often seems morally
confused, and increasingly indifferent to religion in
general and Christianity in particular, Catholic schools
offer a path not just to knowledge but to moral wholeness.

Most Rev. Charles Chaput
Archbishop of Philadelphia

When I became pastor of a parish with a school in 1996, I
quickly came to the awareness that about 40% of school
families were only marginally engaged in the life of the
parish. I had a choice: become annoyed that excellence in
education or sports was what drew them or seize the
opportunity for what we now call the new evangelization.
This choice is critical today in our Catholic schools. The
key is that we do not see faith and excellence as an
either/or, but embrace both as we plan for excellence in
every aspect of Catholic education, with our faith being
the foundation and inspiration for all school programs
and activities.

Catholic schools not only can, but must, be a major
vehicle for the new evangelization.

Most Rev. Joseph Kurtz
Archbishop of Louisville

Catholic schools are vital to the New Evangelization,
because they reflect the light of Christ in a powerful way.
They place a candle in children’s hands, and God lights it
with his Son. Catholic schools guard and nurture Christ’s
light because we know it is only by his light that children
will see and learn the truth. I am convinced that Catholic
education is one of our most effective tools for preparing a
new generation of Catholic citizens who will offer the
world the gift of a well-formed conscience and a true
vision of life, hope and peace.

Most Rev. J. Peter Sartain
Archbishop of Seattle



As the Catholic Church in America proclaims the Gospel with renewed energy through the New Evangelization, it is imperative that we celebrate parents and families as primary educators. In so doing, and in providing an authentic witness to the inalienable parental right to educate one's children, we not only form a new generation in the faith, but we testify to the hope and joy that abounds in the Good News.

Catholic Schools are the privileged vehicles to accomplish the work of this New Evangelization. These schools offer young people something that no other educational institution can match—a living encounter with Jesus.

The late Most Rev. Joseph P. McFadden
Bishop of Harrisburg

The sole purpose of Catholic education is forming the child in holiness and wisdom in cooperation with the families in order to instill the Truth of Jesus Christ.

Most Rev. John Noonan
Bishop of Orlando

Catholic schools have always been the hope of the Church in our country. Each successive generation of Catholics, from the time of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton to the present, have benefitted not only from the faith that has been taught there but also from the faith that has been witnessed in our Catholic schools. True evangelization requires both teaching and witness as our young people encounter the Lord Jesus Christ.

Most Rev. David M. O'Connell, C.M.
Bishop of Trenton

Catholic schools are integral to the mission of the Church and are strong agents for the New Evangelization. Jesus Christ and the doctrinal and moral teachings of the Church, which lead to witness and service, are at the heart of Catholic schools.

Most Rev. John M. Quinn
Bishop of Winona

Catholic Schools lead the way for the New Evangelization precisely because—as our students receive an education anchored in our rich Catholic heritage of faith—our adults have the chance to rediscover the world and all it reveals to us with child-like wonder.

Most Rev. Joseph Tyson
Bishop of Yakima





Catholic schools, at the heart of the teaching mission of the Church, have evangelization as their primary purpose. On a daily basis, Catholic school educators have the unique opportunity to pass on, to increasingly diverse populations, the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Church and to fulfill the command, “Go, make disciples of all nations.”

Most Rev. Jerome Listecki
Archbishop of Milwaukee

Our schools need our commitment, our self-investment, and our resolve if they are to become the instruments of the New Evangelization Christ wants them to be. Our children need what we have to offer in our schools, which is to say they need Jesus, and woe to us if we fail them. Jesus himself expects this of us, and we cannot disappoint him ... because we know that nothing less than our children’s salvation is at stake.

Most Rev. Allen Vigneron
Archbishop of Detroit

The unique mission of Catholic education begins with the commitment to unlock the full intellectual, social and human potential of every student entrusted to its care while at the same time forming the student into the image of Jesus the Lord. This mission is intimately tied to the work of the New Evangelization because every Catholic school exists to foster a personal, living and ongoing encounter with the Lord in the life of its students and staff, through instruction, reflection, prayer and service. Realizing such a transformative encounter is what makes Catholic schools unique, irreplaceable and at the forefront of the Church’s evangelization efforts.

Most Rev. Frank Caggiano
Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn

Catholic schools, with their emphasis on innovative ways of educating the whole person, are well positioned as instruments of the New Evangelization. By focusing on the person of Jesus Christ and living Gospel values, Catholic schools inspire young people to testify to the wisdom and value of truth, without compromise.

Most Rev. Francis DiLorenzo
Bishop of Richmond

The New Evangelization challenges us to deepen our faith and live the Gospel in the circumstances of our times. The bishops have long considered the Catholic school the unique setting in which the individual student’s faith becomes living, conscious, and active through the light of instruction. The Catholic school is essential to the New Evangelization as well as the New Evangelization is essential to living the mission of the Catholic school.

Most Rev. Kevin Farrell
Bishop of Dallas

At the core of the New Evangelization is the invitation to rediscover the faith, thereby encountering the Lord Jesus Christ, the One Savior of the world. Catholic education—and especially the Catholic School, the one place where such an education is made available in an integrated, consistent and clear manner—provides the ideal setting for rediscovering the faith anew and encountering the Lord Jesus as a Person. In a word, the Catholic School is the finest herald and the strongest protagonist for the New Evangelization. Students, teachers, staff and parents together will rediscover the faith and encounter Jesus Christ, above all, in His Real presence in the Eucharist.

Most Rev. Paul Loverde
Bishop of Arlington

For more than two centuries, Catholic schools of the United States have endured as one of the Church’s most successful apostolates. Surely the New Evangelization can flourish among the millions of families and children that our nation’s Catholic schools form (and millions more that they could form) in the faith. Faithful and joyful Catholics—worshipping in vibrant parishes, educating their children in effective Catholic schools, uniting in acts of charity for the less fortunate—evangelize by living the Gospel daily. Formed in mind and heart, Catholic school graduates can renew the Church from within by becoming zealous and articulate Catholics who know their faith, commit to lives of charity and justice, and serve as witnesses of Christ’s love. As the Church re-imagines the role of Catholic schools in the Third Millennium, we acknowledge their singular capacity to transmit the faith to new generations and to draw people to Christ.



Secretariat of Catholic Education