



## Catholic Education and Schools

### Catholic Schools and Diversity

Not everyone in a Catholic school is necessarily Catholic. One often finds a variety of religious denominations both among the staff and the students. However,

the staff and students strive to live by certain standards and principles of behavior approved by the Catholic Church. Among these principles and standards is respect for the religious life and convictions of those from other persuasions. By the same token, a Catholic

school does not compromise its teachings. Discussion is not avoided on marriage, Eucharist, sexuality, abortion and a host of other subjects just because students and teachers from other denominations may hold different views or values.

### The Question...

The question often asked is whether or not public schools need to be involved in the religious dimension of life. Isn't instructing the students in the academic, secular subjects of mathematics, science, literature and such enough? Shouldn't religious instruction be left to the Church and the home? In the United States, this is how Catholics and other denominations are educated. However, it is not how they would choose to be educated if they could have it otherwise. The pundits advocating for the absence of God in all forms from public school bellow the slogan of separation between Church and State. This perspective has resulted in our schools being more God-free in this country today than they are crime-free and drug-free.

Why is it so important for our government to offer school choice to all students through a voucher system allowing the money to follow the student to the public or private school of his or her choice? First, from a good business point-of-view, such a choice would provide a healthy competition between the schools. In such cases, the students become the beneficiaries, which after all, is the purpose of all institutions of learning... to serve the best interest and the wellbeing of the students.

Secondly, Fr. Paul Andrew, S.J. gives another reason which is most important. He simply states:

*"The reason is that if a school puts no flag of its own on its mast, other flag wavers will jump in to fill the vacuum. If a school*

*preaches no values, other powers will intrude with their values."*

*"In Communist countries, that power will be the State, insisting through both teachers and parents that children are there to serve the State. In the consumer democracies of the west, the intruder is likely to be the voice of the market place, which shouts at us through advertisements in the media telling us that a man is worth what he buys and consumes. Where a school hesitates to preach Christ's Gospel, or preaches it with an uncertain voice, the hucksters around us jump in with their own gospel and their own version of the 'Good Life.' A school that confines itself to teaching 'subjects' in a value vacuum finds the void quickly filled with gospels of a different sort."*

### Facts about U.S. Catholic Schools

- There are 6,568 Catholic schools: 5,368 elementary; 1,200 secondary.
- 27 new schools opened; 88 consolidated or closed.
- 2,044 schools have a waiting list for admission.
- Student diversity: 20.4% are racial minorities.
- Non-Catholic enrollment is 328,690 which is 16.9% of the total enrollment.
- The student/teacher ratio is 13:1



According to statistics published by The National Catholic Educational Association in their 2014-15 Annual Report on Schools, Enrollment and Staffing.

\* More information to follow on this topic next week.