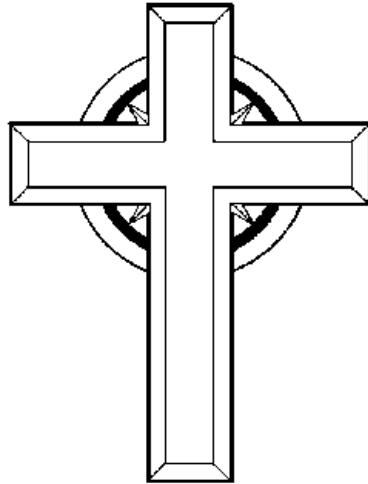


Section 2

CATHOLIC EDUCATION



*“Catholic education is a unique gift
from God, nurture it and do not be
afraid to promote our faith.”*

His Eminence, Thomas Cardinal Collins

Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CATHOLIC EDUCATION	2
INTRODUCTION	2
THE DEVELOPMENT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN ONTARIO	3
CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN DUFFERIN-PEEL	8
INTRODUCTION	8
Excerpts.....	8
Challenges.....	10
An Integrated Faith	11
Trustees	12
Administration	12
Student Growth	13
Changing Boundaries and Demographics.....	13
Schools.....	14
School Staff.....	14
Expanding Program Choices.....	15
Faith Formation.....	16
AN ASSESSMENT OF A GREAT WORK IN PROGRESS	17
FOUR REASONS WHY WE NEED CATHOLIC EDUCATION.....	17
THREE IMMEDIATE CONCERNS TO ADDRESS	18
TWO DEVELOPMENTS IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION AS A WORK IN PROGRESS	19
ONE PRIORITY	19
“SCHOOLS TO BELIEVE IN – THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE”	20
SISTER CLARE FITZGERALD TO THE CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMUNITY IN RENFREW, ONTARIO NOVEMBER, 1999.	22
CATHOLIC SCHOOL VALUES	24

CATHOLIC EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Catholic education is a special gift to be cherished, supported, nurtured and protected. The purpose of this section is to help the reader gain a better understanding of our roots.....how did Catholic education begin and develop in Ontario and what has sustained it to the present day.

To accomplish this purpose a number of excellent articles and excerpts have been drawn from a variety of sources and are included in the section.

The first article, written by **Mark McGowan**, and entitled “*Development of Catholic Schools in Ontario*”, provides an excellent historical overview from earliest times to the present day. This article provides the foundation for a video/CD presentation entitled “*Catholic Education; An Enduring Gift*”, prepared by the Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers Association. Copies of this video/CD have been provided to every school in Dufferin-Peel.

The second inclusion is comprised of excerpts from a book describing the history of Catholic education in Dufferin and Peel regions and the development of the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board. It follows quite nicely on the framework established by Dr. McGowan’s article.

Articles by:

Father James Mulligan, (*An Assessment of a Great Work in Progress*),
Msgr. Dennis Murphy, (*Schools to Believe In – The Difference We Make*),
Sr. Clare Fitzgerald (*Address to Catholic Education Community in Renfrew, ON*)
Daniel M. Buechlein, (*Catholic School Values*),

provide commentary and insight into how great a gift Catholic education is and how essential it is that we cherish and protect it.

It is our hope that this section, will broaden the understanding and appreciation of where Catholic education came from, how it evolved and the tremendous efforts and sacrifices made by so many over the years. Members of the Catholic school community will be better able to provide the conscientious support and constant vigilance that will be necessary to sustain it for generations to come.

“We must grasp firmly the challenge of providing a kind of education whose curriculum will be inspired more by reflection than by technique, more by a search for wisdom than by the accumulation of information.”

Pope John Paul II – Newfoundland, 1984

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN ONTARIO

By Mark McGowan, PhD

The creation of a state-supported, universally accessible, and comprehensive Catholic education system in Ontario was never anticipated by the first pioneers in what was then called Upper Canada. In the 1830’s, Catholic education – for that matter any education – was considered to be within the realm of the few: young men training for the church, public service, or the profession. Bishop Alexander MacDonell of Kingston secured some financial support from the crown for schoolmasters, some of whom were priests. Small groups of children undertook a classical and catechetical education in their parish rectory, a local home, or in log schoolhouses often shared between Catholics and their non-Catholic neighbours.

In 1841, MacDonnell’s dream of more permanent funding for Catholic schools by the state was partially realized, when the new school Act for the United Province of Canada (a union of Upper and Lower Canada, today’s Ontario and Quebec) included a clause that permitted Catholics and others to establish denominational schools. The growth of Catholic schools over the next twenty-five years was punctuated by sectarian violence, linguistic conflict, and political maneuvering within the poorly conceived and constitutionally flawed legislature of Canada. These schools also emerged at a time in the 1840’s and 1850’s when Egerton Ryerson, the School Superintendent of Canada West, pushed for free, universal, and an academically progressive public school system in what had been Upper Canada (now Ontario). He believed such schools would promote loyalty to the Crown, solid citizenship, a sound curriculum, and a generic Christianity.

The latter point was troubling to many Catholics, who believed that the non-sectarian Christianity promoted in public schools, and fostered by the large numbers of Protestant schoolmasters, amounted to little more than Protestant proselytization. Bishop Armand de Charbonnel of Toronto (1850 – 1860) went so far as to call public schools an “insult” to the Catholic population and he urged his flock to establish and support distinctively Catholic schools. All of this squabbling over education came at a time of troubled relations between Catholics and Protestants in Canada. Although caused, in part, by sectarian bitterness imported from Europe, Upper Canadian Christians created their own reasons to prey upon one another; the arrival of thousands of Irish Catholic

refugees from the potato famine was regarded as a scourge upon the land, while French Canadian Catholic legislators were accused of furthering the interests of Catholicism by means of their strong presence in the Canadian Assembly. In the 1850's expressions of sectarian bitterness varied from hateful rhetorical exchanges between Protestants and Catholics in the public press, to full-fledged riots in the towns and cities of what is now Ontario.

The extension of Catholic schools in Upper Canada was often at the heart of the bitterness and bloodshed. In 1855, by the weight of French Canadian Catholic votes, the Assembly passed the Tache Act, which extended the rights of Upper Canada's Catholic minority to create and manage their own schools. Similarly in 1863, the votes of French Canadian Catholic legislators and their moderate Anglophone allies passed the Scott Act, which confirmed, among other things, Catholic school trustees with all of the rights and privileges of their counterparts in the public schools, and allowed Catholic schools a share of the Common School Fund provided by the Canadian government. What infuriated English-speaking Protestants in Upper Canada was that they did not want these schools in their section of Canada but were forced to accept them because of the preponderance of French-Canadian Catholic legislators (from the Lower Canadian section of the Assembly) who were determined to secure educational rights for their Catholic brothers and sisters, who were a minority in Upper Canada.

The sectionalism that helped to create Catholic schools also prompted Upper Canadian Protestants to demand the end to the farcical union between Upper and Lower Canada. In 1867, the British North America Act created Canada, with both federal and provincial governments, the latter of which were solely responsible for education. Catholics in the new province of Ontario now faced a hostile Protestant majority, without the security of their old French-Canadian allies from the new province of Quebec. In advance of Confederation, with their fragile minority rights to Catholic schools in mind, Archbishop John Joseph Lynch of Toronto (1860-1888) and politician Thomas D'Arcy McGee initiated a process to secure the rights of Catholic schools. Under section 93 of the BNA Act, all the educational rights held by religious minorities at the time of Confederation would be secured constitutionally thereafter. For Catholics in Ontario this meant the right to establish, manage and control their own schools, and to share proportionally in the government funds allotted to education. In time, this section 93 would become the touchstone for most constitutional and legal debates regarding Ontario's Catholic schools.

Ryerson never thought denominational schools would survive. In the late nineteenth century, Catholic schools were chronically underfunded because of their small tax base, their inability to share in the business tax assessment, and their securing of only a tiny share of government school funds. Moreover, after Confederation, Ontario grew rapidly and emerged as Canada's industrial and urban heartland. The population increased dramatically and new strains were placed on the education system. Ontarians demanded progressive, high quality education commensurate with the commercial and industrial advances of their society. Catholic schools survived the stresses of the new Ontario because of the dogged dedication of Catholic leaders to fight for legislative changes favouring their schools and because of the generosity of Catholic religious orders who dominated the teaching ranks in these schools, adapted to the new curricular changes, and donated much of their salary back into the schools. Women religious were notable in their ability to attain provincial teaching certification, despite the popular belief (particularly among Catholics themselves) that "nuns" would never expose themselves to the dangers of "Protestant" teacher's

colleges (Normal Schools).

In no case was the self-sacrifice of Catholic school supporters more evident than in the case of high schools. Created by an act of the Ontario Legislature in 1871, Ontario's high schools would emerge as one way in which your Ontarians could be molded to meet the demands of their burgeoning urban industrial society. Because they had not existed as such at the time of Confederation, Catholic high schools were not eligible for Provincial grants. Before Confederation, however, some Catholic schools offered instruction to older students under the auspices of the common school. Later, several Catholic schools offered fifth book classes (closely resembling grade 9 and 10) and were in a legal position to do so after 1899, when the government broadened its regulations regarding schools that offered a "continuation" of the curriculum beyond what is now grade eight. In reality, however, Catholics could only direct their taxes to public high schools and, if they so desired, could pay tuition fees to have their children receive a full high school education in a "private" Catholic school, usually run by religious orders. After decades of Catholic lobbying and sectarian fighting on this injustice, the Catholic Bishops and the Ontario Government agreed that a test case be brought before the courts to establish whether or not Catholic high schools were entitled to government funding under the terms of the BNA Act. In 1925, Catholics in the Township of Tiny (Simcoe County) launched the legal challenge – poetically named "Tiny vs. the King". By 1928, the highest court of appeal in the British Empire – the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council – offered a bittersweet decision on the Catholic high school issue: Catholics, due to pre-Confederation precedents and the subsequent development of the "fifth book" continuation classes had just claims to funding for grades nine and ten; but Catholics had not constitutional rights to funding beyond that, although the Provincial government was at liberty to grant it, if it desired.

This was of small consolation to the Catholic community. The pressures on Catholic schools were many. In 1900 there were 42,397 students in the system; twenty-five years later the Catholic school population had more than doubled to 95,3000 students. A low municipal tax base, a minute share of the business tax (only Catholic businesses who wished to direct their taxes to separate schools), slim government grants, and a caution to keep their tax rates competitive with the affluent public school boards, collectively spelled financial hardship for Catholic schools. Facilities were old, classrooms generally were crowded, the growing ranks of lay teachers were paid less, and programs for study were limited in both breadth and variety. Despite the fact that Catholic schools matriculated students who were competitive with their peers in the public system, and although Catholic youth moved on to University in greater numbers by the 1930's, Catholic schools were still saddled with the label of "inferiority". The onset of the Great Depression in the 1930's threatened the very existence of the system.

As it had so many times in its history, the Catholic community rallied to save its schools. By the 1930's the mantle of leadership in the fight for Catholic education was passed from the clergy to the laity. Martin J. Quinn, a Toronto businessman, organized the Catholic Taxpayers Association to lobby the Provincial Government to secure the equitable distribution of corporate and business taxes to Catholic school boards. With chapters in over 400 parishes across the Province, the CTA helped to elect the Mitchell Hepburn's Liberals in 1934, and subsequently his government passed the much sought legislation in 1936. The victory on the corporate tax issue, however was short lived. In December 1936, a wild by-election fight in East Hastings, reminiscent of the sectarian

explosions of the 1850's, spelled disaster for the Liberals and convinced Premier Hepburn that the fair distribution of business taxes to Catholics would defeat his government in the next general election. The bill was withdrawn and the Catholic community's hope for economic justice was dashed.

Canada's involvement in World War II (1939-1945) effectively ended the Great Depression. The post-war situation, however, merely heightened the crisis facing Catholic schools. Renewed migration from Europe, particularly from the Catholic communities of Southern and Central Europe, and the natural increase in population that came as a result of the "baby boom", placed increased demands on Ontario's Catholic schools. More spaces were needed for the increasing number of students in Ontario's cities, particularly Hamilton, Ottawa, and Toronto. The suburbanization of Ontario in the 1950's necessitated new Catholic schools in rural areas.

A decline in religious orders and the increase in the number of lay teachers placed additional financial burdens on school boards that were already desperately trying to keep their school facilities and programs up to Provincial standards.

In 1950, the offer of the Hope Commission (Ontario's first Royal Commission on Education) to fund Catholic schools fully to the end of grade six, but not to subsequent grades was indeed tempting. Such ideas posed an interesting dilemma for Catholic leaders: an abbreviated but equally and fully funded system at the primary-junior level or, a complete system from Kindergarten to Grade 13 only partially funded, and ever-struggling at the secondary level. The Catholic commissioners, after much deliberation with the Ontario Bishops, decided to dissent from the Commission; they submitted a brief minority report, highlighted by historian Franklin Walker's readable and concise (less than 90 pages) outline of the history and constitutionality of Catholic schools. In contrast, the overdue and oversized (900 pages plus) majority report of the Hope Commission was generally ignored, as was its demand for scaling back of government funding to separate schools. The system would survive but would continue to struggle, given the many demands placed upon it by a growing and increasingly upwardly mobile Catholic population.

Given the demographic, economic, and social pressures facing the Catholic schools, Catholics once again rallied for justice. The Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association (OSSTA), the fledgling Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) and the English Catholic Educational Association of Ontario (ECEAO) worked hard as individual groups and, at times, co-operatively, to better the situation of their schools. Co-operative lobbying efforts bore fruit in the late 1950's and early 1960's when the Ministry of education initiated such programs as "equalized assessment", the "growth needs factor", and Ontario Foundation Tax Plan (1963) to "have-not" boards. Many separate school boards gleaned additional funds by means of these programs. In 1969, rural boards were amalgamated into larger county-based units with the hope that larger boards would have access to more funds, be more efficient, and provide improved programs and facilities. Together, the funding provided by the Foundation Tax Plan, and the opportunities created by board restructuring, meant a new influx of cash into Catholic elementary schools.

Catholic high schools, however, continued to suffer. Funded only at an elementary level for its junior grades and sustained principally by tuition fees for the senior grades, Catholics were forced

to develop innovative ways to keep the high schools afloat. To make matters worse, the late 1960's and early 1970's witnessed a decline in vocation to religious life, and a slow erosion through increased retirements within the existing cadre of priests, brothers, and sisters in the schools. High schools depended on lay teachers accepting lower salary levels, parents operating lotteries and bingos, and students helping to clean and maintain school facilities. In the election of 1971, the Progressive Conservative government of William Davis won a healthy majority sustained, in part, by its public refusal to extend funding to Catholic high schools. When this same government proposed changes to Ontario's tax laws that would see Catholic high school property subject to taxation, it appeared that Catholic high schools were about to sing their death song. In 1976, the Blair Commission traveled the province to assess the reaction to the tax plan and was greeted at each stop with formidable submissions by the Catholic "partners".

Through the combined efforts of clergy, trustees, teachers, parents and students, the tax plan was scrapped and Catholic high schools dodged a bullet.

Ironically, in 1984, William Davis surprised his own caucus when he announced that there would be extended funding to grades eleven, twelve and thirteen in Ontario's Catholic schools. Davis regarded the decision as "justice" to Catholic schools; the cynical saw the government fishing for Catholic votes. Within three years, having faced and survived constitutional challenges, Ontario's Catholic schools finally enjoyed extended funding from junior kindergarten to the end of Grade Thirteen. Funds poured into the Catholic system and the landscape of Ontario bore the imprint of new schools, complete with facilities, equipment, and comforts scarcely imagined in previous generations.

In our own time, both Catholic and Public education systems have witnessed an unprecedented "revolution" of institutional and curricular change. In 1995, school councils were instituted to bring parents and teachers together for the local management of their community schools. Shortly thereafter the Progressive Conservative government reduced the number of school boards, in addition to cutting the number of school trustees, while placing a cap on their salaries. In 1997, in a move that may have startled Ryerson himself, the Provincial Government suspended the right of trustees to raise taxes for schools and placed educational funding exclusively in the hands of the Provincial Government. For the first time in Ontario's educational history funding for education is no longer a shared responsibility between the local community and the central government. For Catholics, however, the new financing model means equality of funding for Catholic and Public schools. Those who have reflected upon the history of their schools have realized that finally justice has been accorded to Catholics, under the terms of the Constitution (BNA) Act.

Not all Catholics, however, have been in favour of the changes; teachers and others have seen this new centralization as jeopardizing the ability of Catholics to control and manage their own schools. There is some fear that the Provincial Government will take an increased role in dictating to Catholic schools, perhaps to the detriment of the distinct denominational character of these schools. In the current ideological climate dominated by the proverbial "bottom line" and secular values, it is believed by some that the "taxpayers" of Ontario will be loath to support two education systems. In addition, the demise of publicly funded Catholic schools in Quebec and Newfoundland has contributed to growing uneasiness about the future of Ontario's Catholic schools.

Catholics in Ontario must be awake to the “signs of the times”. With legislation supporting funding equity in hand, Catholics cannot afford to become complacent about their education system. In a secular and pluralistic society, denominational rights, particularly in the matter of schools, are not widely subscribed. Those who know the story of the development of Catholic schools in this province must realize that these schools are a gift that should not be squandered. Ontario’s Catholics have a responsibility to nourish, improve and defend their schools as a distinctive and valuable contribution to the vitality of their faith community and to Ontario society as a whole. As history has demonstrated and as Vatican 11 has confirmed, the laity have a vital role to play in the development of Catholic education. There is a need for schools that place Gospel values at the center of a wholistic education. In Ontario, our inheritance as Catholics has been considerable, but so are the challenges that, no doubt, the future will bring.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN DUFFERIN-PEEL

INTRODUCTION

The following excerpts were taken from an excellent book outlining the history of Catholic education and Catholic schools in the Dufferin and Peel regions. This book, “OUR STORY. OUR TRADITION. OUR JOURNEY” was prepared by a group of educators in the Board and published in 2011. Inserts at various places provide present-day updated information. You are encouraged to find and read the whole book in order to gain a fuller appreciation of the people, events, and many sacrifices that brought about the birth and development of one of the largest school boards in the province of Ontario.....the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board.

Excerpts

As the Ontario school system developed during nineteenth century, Catholics made significant gains in establishing the right to operate publically funded Catholic schools. Leading Catholic clergy and laypeople spoke up for Catholic interests and helped shape legislation. They persisted in their efforts to develop the foundations of an education system that would allow Catholics to teach the curriculum through a faith lens, incorporating the life and teachings of Jesus Christ throughout. By the end of the century Catholics had the right to establish separate elementary schools and the funding to operate them and were still seeking equity with the public school system.

However, not all Catholics took advantage of the right to establish local schools. In Peel, the townships of Chinguacousy, Albion, Caledon, and Toronto Gore had fifty-eight common (public) schools by 1850, while Peel County did not have its first parochial (Catholic) school until 1861. Dufferin had one parochial school, which was founded in 1864. The differences in numbers resulted partially from discriminatory obstacles that Catholics faced, including not having enough Catholic students to support a school, and often from social conditions and attitudes of the time.

Until the 1960s each community in Ontario had its own school board (known as a school section) and the communities paid taxes to their school sections. As a result, many rural school sections

did not have the tax bases needed to provide modern educational resources. For Catholics, the problem was compounded because separate school boards had little access to corporate taxes.

In the 1960s the [Ontario] Department of Education started to phase out local school boards in favour of larger county boards. This allowed for savings in administration, purchasing and more equitable taxation. The change also made it easier to recruit teachers because they would enjoy greater economic security and more opportunities for professional development and promotion. Until these larger boards were formed, establishing schools was a pioneering effort. Often when a new parish opened it either had no schools in place or had a school that had been established just before the parish opened. In many cases as the population grew, parishioners went door to door to sign Catholics residents up as separate school ratepayers so the community had the required number of people to form a school section.

Until 1947 only one township in Peel, Toronto Gore, had a Catholic school board and Dufferin had none. In 1948 that began to change when Catholics in Malton, which had grown because of World War II, established a board (school section). In the 1950s and 1960s the young families moving into other parts of Peel helped establish boards in Albion, Brampton, Chinguacousy, Clarkson, Cooksville, Dixie, Erindale, Lakeview, Malton, Orangeville, Port Credit, and Streetsville. One board was founded in less-populated Dufferin; it was in Orangeville.

In 1969 the provincial government ended local administration for rural boards and amalgamated them into larger county-based units with the hope that larger boards would have access to more funds, be more efficient, and provide improved programs and facilities.

The task involved some twenty-seven schools and hundreds of employees, individual board payment schedules, financing and debts. Bookkeeping practices were reviewed, inventories, real estate, administrative personnel, special education, non-teaching staff, custodial services, and maintenance were aligned.

The amalgamation was timely because in 1960s and 1970s there was decline in vocations to religious life and an increase in the retirements of both ordained and lay people. With its new resources, the Dufferin-Peel County Roman Catholic Separate School Board worked “to provide equal opportunities of education to the highest possible standard for all children in our schools.”

In the forty years since the formal beginning of the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board in January 1969, Dufferin-Peel has grown from 27 elementary schools to 119 and from no secondary schools to 26. The student population has grown from 9,000 students to more than 85,000 and the staff from under 500 to more than 9,500. The quality of education has also improved significantly and the Catholic faith remains an integral part of school life. The tremendous growth occurred because of the cooperation of schools, parents, and parishes in responding to the opportunities and the challenges resulting from changes in education, society, and the Church.

As well as having to deal with a lack of funding and local demands for more and better schools, the board has faced three other major challenges since 1970. Introducing Catholic secondary

schools was one. Keeping pace with dynamic changes in population growth is on-going. The third, and most important, is keeping the faith vibrant in students' lives. The current mission statement captures the fullness of the commitment to do so:

The Mission of the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, in partnership with the family and church, is to provide, in a responsible manner, a Catholic education which develops spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, social, and physical capabilities of each individual to live fully today and to meet the challenges of the future, thus enriching the community.

Challenges

From the time that Bishop Alexander MacDonnell, Ontario's first bishop, sought funding for Catholic education, Catholics have had to remain vigilant in their quest to offer students a Catholic education. At first, Catholics had to fight for legal rights to offer separate school education and for adequate funding to do it. The role of faith was taken for granted within the Church and many of those outside the Church accepted that religion had a place in schools—public and separate. However, when legal rights and equal funding were in place the focus shifted to keeping the faith itself strong.

Until the 1960s, Catholics widely accepted the importance of taking the lead from the parish in practicing the tenets of the faith and of ensuring it had a vital place in schools. Until well into the 1960s, school boards and parishes typically had close relations; priests could be closely involved with school life, and members of teaching orders brought their convictions into the classroom. Parents and children readily accepted the teachings of the church. There was very little questioning of faith. Then a confluence of changes in the Church and society presented separate school boards with unanticipated challenges.

Since the 1960s, social, political, economic, and technological changes have undermined attitudes toward religion and the importance of the Church in society and the family. In the 1960s and 1970s the focus on providing freedom of choice led many to reject traditional values.

The changes initiated by the bishops at the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) had a mixed impact on parishes and schools. In trying to be more relevant, the bishops at what has been called "a Pastoral Council" had avoided the use of "formulas and definitions." Instead they had used "more human terms," hoping that the psychological approach would "be more relevant and more easily accepted."

According to the late Bishop Alexander Carter of Sault Ste. Marie, while the Council didn't intend to "confuse the basic teachings of the church," after the Council "confusion arose" about Catholic beliefs. He laid responsibility on the bishops who had "failed to speak with sufficient clarity on

some of the issues” and those theologians who had crossed the line by teaching “contrary to the authentic teaching of the Church, as proposed by the bishops in communion with the Pope.”

By the close of the twentieth century, Catholic schools could no longer assume that students had gained a strong appreciation for Church liturgies or respect for Catholic beliefs through regular participation in Mass or other devotional practices, such as the Rosary. The new understanding brought by Vatican II caused changes in many school practices. Schools traditionally had held Living Rosaries, the crowning of Mary, and large communion classes. After Vatican II, this changed, with an emphasis on liturgy, not devotionals or sacramentals.

“In any Catholic school in Ontario today, the majority of students are unchurched,” writes Father James T. Mulligan, CSC. As a result, schools have had to assume a greater responsibility for “Catholic socialization” and the “unchurched demographic influences the content of Catholic education...” Mulligan challenges “concerned parents and pastors and Catholic teachers and administrators... to be sensitive to this changing reality.”

Mulligan notes that the laity are assuming more responsibility for ministry and urged Catholic educators and parents to be confident in “exercising pastoral and faith education in the Catholic school.” He also said, “The reality is that for most of our kids now we are the church!”

An Integrated Faith

As well as growing in size over the years, Dufferin- Peel has enhanced the quality of its programs and services as it seeks to serve a larger and increasingly multi-cultural student body. The growth itself has taken many forms: the development of the board and the administration, the building and refurbishing of schools and facilities, the hiring of more staff, and addition and redesigning of programs. The board also taken an increasingly larger role in the spiritual formation of students.

These changes have been governed by two responsibilities. As with all boards in Ontario, Dufferin-Peel must comply with the fundamental principles and philosophies developed by the province through the Ministry of Education. As well, it has the responsibility of providing a quality Catholic education to its students.

As a result, Dufferin-Peel, like other Catholic schools, is distinguished by its integration of religious truths and values with life, which is of vital importance in light of contemporary pressures to isolate the two. Robert Dixon writes that “Catholic education is not a subject but rather, it offers a way to view the world that speaks to the interrelationship between faith, knowledge and action.”

Trustees

With the amalgamation of 1969, the board moved from a largely volunteer to a professional administration. Operating in a much larger forum, trustees moved from “keeper of the keys” to executive management and overseeing large budgets and setting policies.

In the early boards trustees, principals, and teachers provided the administrative services. Whoever happened to be available undertook the arrangement of repairs, the purchasing of supplies, the organization of bus routes, the paying of employees, the completion of reports for the Department of Education, the hiring of teachers, the development of curriculum documents, the borrowing of money, the tendering of projects and a million other details. After amalgamation, professional staff looked after the daily needs of the system.

In 1990s the Ontario government introduced a series of measures that reduced the powers of school boards, centralized more authorize in the Ministry of Education, and made significant changes to funding and programs. Bill 104 the *Fewer School Boards Act*, 1997 created larger (district) boards and reduced the number of trustees.

In 1997 Bill 160, the *Education Quality Improvement Act*, introduced a new funding formula that resulted in Catholic boards receiving the same level of funding as public boards. This let Catholic boards like Dufferin-Peel improve their programs and facilities. The bill also drew negative reaction because the formula reduced funding levels for public boards and some measures centralized key aspects of education and made changes to teacher’s working conditions

Administration

In 2000, Bill 74 *Education Accountability Act* further increased centralized Ministry of Education control over school boards. The Ministry put more emphasis on accounting and fiscal transparency and required boards to operate with balanced budgets, which meant they had to make cuts to staff, programs, and services. Some of the financially troubled boards, including Dufferin-Peel, resisted and were taken over by the Ministry of Education. In October 2006 the Ministry appointed a supervisor to operate Dufferin-Peel and balance the budget, which had a \$7.5 million deficit. The supervisor, who had been given a two-year mandate, returned the operations to the board after instituting changes, including setting up financial guidelines, and reducing the deficit to \$1.7 million.

Gradually, some people developed expertise in these areas and became the administrative staff. Eventually they would be paid and become professional staff, but this was often after long years of giving volunteer services. As the board became larger, professional staff was hired to oversee the daily operations of our schools. They too were pioneers.

At the inception of the Dufferin-Peel Board in January 1969, the administrative structure remained relatively simple. The board of sixteen trustees met in the administration offices of the former Mississauga Catholic School Board at St. Patrick School. One classroom was converted to a board room and three into general offices for the academic and business administration staff. The corridor was used for the receptionist and as a shipping and receiving area to handle supplies for the schools.

By 1971, the board employed 120 non-teaching personnel including school secretaries, caretakers, and administrative staff and it needed a larger administrative centre. To provide a long-term solution to the space problem, the board purchased a site at the corner of Highway 10 and Matheson Boulevard in Mississauga for a \$7-million administrative centre, which it financed partially through the sale of surplus properties. The Catholic Education Centre was blessed and officially opened by His Eminence Cardinal Carter in September of 1985.

Student Growth

The building boom of the 1950s had created the need for Catholic schools in Peel and the on-going increases in Catholic population resulted in the need for more services. To accommodate these changes and similar growth in other regions outside the City of Toronto, the Archdiocese of Toronto had to open twenty-one new parishes, build new churches, and expand some existing facilities. Dufferin-Peel had to rapidly add schools and hire more teaching and support staff.

Changing Boundaries and Demographics

The population growth resulted in changes in municipal government and the status of communities. In 1970 the formation of the Regional Municipality of Peel, which incorporated Mississauga, Brampton, Bramalea, Caledon, and Bolton, aligned municipal government with the school boards. In Dufferin, Shelburne became a town in 1976 and the Town of Mono, which is just north of Caledon, was incorporated in 1999. In 1995 Grand Valley and East Luther townships amalgamated.

Between 1968 and 1978 the Peel population increased from 216,000 to more than 430,000. By 1988 it was more than 643,000. Between 2001 and 2006, the population in the Peel grew 17.2 percent, and today, the Region of Peel has more than a million people. By 2006, 48.4 percent of the region's population, or 561,240 were immigrants.

Dufferin, which is largely rural, has had some population growth but not as intense as that of Peel. In 1871 the population of Dufferin County was 16,689 and by 2006 was 54,436 people.

Schools

The patterns of growth in Dufferin and Peel means that most of the Catholic schools are in Peel. In 1969, 70 percent of the school population was located in Mississauga and the other 30 percent was spread over Brampton, Bramalea, Caledon, Bolton, and Dufferin. In 2010-2011 the board operated 145 schools, 119 elementary and 26 secondary in Mississauga, Brampton, Caledon, and Orangeville, with 56 percent of the schools in Mississauga, 37 percent in Brampton, 5 percent in Caledon, and 2 percent in Orangeville.

Full funding of Catholic high schools in 1984 created a population explosion in Dufferin-Peel schools; by 1988, the board had an enrolment of 55,000, a 600 percent growth in twenty years. This rapid growth and lack of capital funding for building created an accommodation crisis and many students had to be housed in temporary structures. Portables, portapack rooms (essentially portables strung together), modular and holding schools, and leased facilities were used as band-aid solutions. In 1988, 45 percent of the 55,000 students were in such buildings. More than 2200 students were bussed outside of their designated school area and another 1500 were bussed to schools rented from the Etobicoke Board of Education.

In 1998 a provincial change in the funding of education resolved the accommodation problem. The introduction of the per-pupil-based funding formula allowed the board to begin an aggressive building program to house more students in permanent structures. As the concentrations of Catholic population shifted over the years, the Dufferin-Peel board has had to change the location of schools. In the last forty years, it has closed eight elementary schools in areas of declining enrolment and opened more than 120 schools in areas of growth. Since 2000, the board has opened fifteen elementary schools in Brampton, eleven elementary schools in Mississauga, two elementary schools in Caledon and Orangeville, and eight secondary schools.

In 2010 the student enrolment was approximately 87,000 students, with more than 50,000 elementary and more than 35,000 secondary students. In addition, more than 30,000 people are enrolled in the Adult and Continuing Education classes.

School Staff

Growth in the numbers of students has also meant increasing demands for qualified, capable staff. During the 1960s and 1970s a decline in vocations to religious life and an increase in the retirements of ordained and lay people added to the need for staff. Dufferin-Peel has endeavoured to attract both “innovators” from other boards and newly qualified teachers so students benefit from a staff with an appropriate blend of experience and youth.

The Dufferin-Peel staff have also been in the forefront of developing and initiating new policies and programs. Dufferin-Peel personnel are well represented on Ministry writing teams and

policy committees and a number have been seconded by the Ministry. The support staff of coordinators and consultants constantly revamp and adapt education policy to reflect the realities of sound Catholic education.

In the early 1990s, Catholic boards faced a change that would have undermined efforts to keep the faith strong in schools. Section 136 of the 1985 *Ontario Education Act* required Catholic boards to stop making a distinction between Catholics and non-Catholics when they hired teachers, starting in September 1995. In 1997 the court ruled in favour of the trustees and Section 136 was declared unconstitutional and of no force or effect. As a result, Ontario Catholic boards have a right to give preference to practicing Catholics when hiring teachers. Staff members who are not directly responsible for educating children are not required to be Catholic.

Expanding Program Choices

After its founding, the Dufferin-Peel Roman Catholic District School Board began adding new programs to offer Catholic families a full range of services, taking care that each new program reflected Catholicity. The board believes that “as Catholics, we cannot teach Science without incorporating values, Biology without discussion of bioethics, Family Life without a central focus on morality, or History without an ethical view of our social evolution.” New programs in Religious Education and Family Life are prepared in consultation with parents, the bishop, and the archbishop, reflecting the partnership of home, school, and Church.

The board has introduced many innovative programs. Soon after its 1969 amalgamation, the board established the Special Services Department and Dufferin-Peel was one of the first boards to hire child care workers to support children with emotional/behavioral problems. In 1980 the Ontario government passed Bill 82, which made access to appropriate programs the right of all exceptional pupils and established processes such as the Identification and Continuous Assessment and Review (IPRC). Dufferin-Peel already had much of what was mandated in place. Bill 82 also allowed Separate Schools to offer classes to students with severe developmental delays for the first time, so the board broadened the program.

In 1973 the board introduced its first junior kindergarten class at St. Peter Elementary School in Orangeville and by September 1974 all schools were accepting four-year-old students. When Ontario started to implement full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds in 2010, Dufferin-Peel opened full-day kindergarten in sixteen schools.

After amalgamation, the board standardized the French-language instruction program so children in all the schools received the same amount of daily instruction. In 1984 extended French was introduced and recently a French Immersion program has begun at selected schools.

The board has kept pace with research findings on the many ways in which students' learn and today offers a wide-range of targeted programs. These include Cooperative Education, International Baccalaureate (IB), Extended French, French Immersion, Specialist High Skills Majors, Pathways, Planning for Independence Program for students with learning disabilities, Workplace Streams, Performing Arts, Integrated Arts and Gifted Programs.

In 1996 Ontario introduced standardized testing in response to the “public’s demand for clearer information about, and greater accountability for, student achievement in Ontario schools.”¹² This put increased pressure on schools to maintain the religious dimension of the school, while meeting the obligation to prepare students for the tests.

In 1997 the Ministry of Education introduced Religious Education as teaching subject faculties of education, so for the first time, Catholic secondary schools had teachers who were formally recognized for their university studies in theology. Because the Ministry of Education recognizes the right of Catholic schools to teach courses from a faith perspective, when the secondary curriculum was revised in 1999, the ministry paid for the writing of both public and Catholic course profiles (support material to assist teachers)

Faith Formation

Over the years, the board has used a variety of strategies to emphasize the gifts of God and the faith commitment to bear witness to the glories of God in action and attitude.

Dufferin-Peel schools develop the spiritual side of each student through courses, participation in the liturgy and sacraments, and involvement in service and social justice projects. Secondary school students take a Religion course in each of their four years, take part in the retreat program, and participate as much as they are able to in the prayer and liturgical life of the school. Courses are taught with a faith lens, so that the Catholic perspective is discussed in all subjects, including Science, History, English, and Civics. In elementary school, students are taught Religion and Family Life beginning in kindergarten, and religion is integrated into all aspects of the curriculum. Schools have strong links to parishes and assist parishes with sacramental preparation.

In both elementary and secondary schools, the Virtues program forms the basis for the provincial character education program. The Catholic virtues of faith, hope, and love are the backbone of the featured monthly virtues. Assemblies, prayers, and classroom activities help students put the virtues into action. Parish staff conduct liturgies and provide other services within the schools. Each school and work location has staff who volunteer to help facilitate faith experiences in their communities. This includes marking the liturgical season with Advent prayer services, Lenten Stations of the Cross, and liturgies. Larger groups gather within the families of schools to share Advent retreats, Seder meals, and larger Eucharist celebrations.

Each secondary school has a chaplaincy/pastoral ministry program, which serves students and staff. The chaplaincy team is responsible for providing information on vocations, acting as a liaison with the community, enhancing relationships with local parishes, arranging for services, and organizing retreats. The team also directs community outreach and social action, which further helps students understand how God can be an integral and fundamental force in their lives.

As Archbishop Philip Pocock wrote “Surely a school system which stresses the sacred character of man, his divine origin and destiny, his responsibility to God, to God’s people and to the entire creation is of greater importance now than at any time since the dawn of Christianity. The Separate School system has a profound and necessary contribution to make, not merely to the Catholic community, but to the entire community of Ontario and to our country”. We continue to question, examine and review the strategies that facilitate this development of faith. It is in attempting to answer the question “what makes us different?” that we gain a better understanding of, and insight into, how we can best facilitate our goal of becoming servants of our Lord.

AN ASSESSMENT OF A GREAT WORK IN PROGRESS

By James T. Mulligan CSC

This is a personal assessment. I say a “great” work in progress because I believe that Catholic education is a gift from God – a great gift from God – not only to the Catholic community of Ontario but to the wider Ontario community, as well. My abiding concern is that Catholic education is a gift that too often tends to be taken for granted; my profound conviction is that our present historical moment demands that the Catholic community and the different partners that constitute the Catholic educational community no longer have the luxury of taking this great gift for granted. In this assessment, I present in outline form a snapshot of Catholic education in Ontario on the threshold of the Jubilee Year. I hope this outline will be helpful in stimulating and helping advance the Catholic education conversation at the local level. It is only through such conversation, in ever expanding circles of folks concerned about Catholic Education, that real ownership of this great gift is realized.

FOUR REASONS WHY WE NEED CATHOLIC EDUCATION

I present the following four reasons in no particular order:

1. Strong emphasis on care, compassion and community are hallmarks of a “Catholic” education. An education with this dominant **community** dimension is so urgent today in a culture that celebrates excessive individualism. Catholic education can and must emphasize mutuality and promote the common good.

2. Catholic education intends to educate for life; that is what we mean by educating the soul. Catholic education is an integral, wholistic education. How different this vision of education is from the mechanistic, overly pragmatic, soulless approach to present educational reform and its sole purpose “to skill” students for the corporate workforce.
3. A Catholic education is a critical education grounded in the examples of the prophets and the lessons of the social gospel. The Catholic school is an invaluable instrument for the transmission of the social teaching and critique of the church. Much in our political, economic and cultural structures is not of the gospel. A Catholic education should introduce students to the gospel critique and be persistent in questioning the taken-for-granted assumptions of the dominant, secular ideology.
4. Increasingly, it is the Catholic school that offers “Catholic socialization” for many young Catholic students. To introduce the young person to Jesus and teach her to pray; to help the student discover the meaning and purpose of his own spiritual journey; to prepare students for sacraments – all of this makes up the urgent faith education dimension of a Catholic education. Imagine, for a moment, the massive challenge our parish communities would face without the Catholic school!

Conclusion: An Ontario society that purports to be caring, compassionate and just needs Catholic education. The evangelizing mission of the church needs Catholic education.

THREE IMMEDIATE CONCERNS TO ADDRESS

Concern #1 – A call for reconciliation and a new imagination.

Developments in the Catholic educational community over the last 36 months make it very clear that the primary threats to the continued existence of our schools is found more from within than from without. While both sides appear to be well-intentioned, Catholic teachers and Catholic trustees, too often, recently, have been working at cross purposes. This is discouraging for all who are passionate about Catholic education. It also sends the message to the wider public that we are in disarray. A new appreciation of the rich tradition of Catholic education and of our long struggle over the years is urgently needed. The stewardship role of Catholic teacher and Catholic trustee must be re-invented.

Concern #2 – The passion for Catholic education must be passed on.

Recent political and constitutional developments in Newfoundland and Quebec underscore the pressing need for parents to claim more and more ownership of Catholic education. By this I mean not simply ownership of education in the neighbourhood Catholic school, but ownership of **Catholic** education in the Catholic school!! For the first 60 years of this century, it was the sister, brothers and priests who pioneered and nurtured Catholic education across Ontario. Over the last three decades and more, lay Catholics, teachers and administrators, have served admirably in maintaining and promoting Catholic education. Reading the signs of the times as we begin the new millennium one must conclude that now is the time for parents. For the most part the passion for Catholic education was missing among the parents in Newfoundland. Concerned parents in Ontario must learn from that experience.

Concern #3 – To work at a distinctively “Catholic” education.

How to keep the Catholic institution –hospital, school, college –“Catholic” in an increasingly secular society? This is the urgent question common to all Catholic institutions across North America these days. This question is of profound concern for the Ontario Catholic education community. “Distinctively Catholic” must characterize every vital dimension of the Catholic school experience: vision of education; selection and exercise of leadership; hiring and forming of teachers; formal and informal curriculum; creation and implementation of policies; and the care given to community. To work at being distinctively Catholic means to mine the profound riches of our Catholic tradition, teaching and worldview. There is much here that remains to be done.

TWO DEVELOPMENTS IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION AS A WORK IN PROGRESS

#1 – The Phenomenon of the Unchurched.

In any Catholic school in Ontario today the majority of students are unchurched! Using unchurched in this way is not a pejorative. It is simply a sociological way of saying that what Catholic socialization does take place in the child’s life now takes place in the school rather than the home or the parish. In a large way, this unchurched demographic now influences the content of Catholic education that a school is able to propose. Concerned parents and pastors, and Catholic teachers and administrators need to be sensitive to this changing reality. Reflection, questioning and discussion are needed to see how the local Catholic school can best serve these students. The Catholic school cannot take the place of parents or parish...but the Catholic school can do something. Each local Catholic school community must reflect on this something with great care.

#2 – A more Confident Ministry to the Unchurched.

Increasingly, in the parish and in other dimensions of church life, the laity are assuming more and more responsibility for ministry. In some cases they are simply reclaiming the roles and functions usurped by the clergy over the centuries, in other cases, they are developing creative new ways of living out the missionary dimension of their baptismal priesthood. Because of the unchurched reality described above, Catholic educators and concerns parents must feel more and more confident in exercising pastoral and faith education ministry in the Catholic school. As a community, we must move beyond “the church should do more for the kids” or “the priest should spend more time in the school” reflex. The reality is that for most of our kids now we are the church!

ONE PRIORITY

Formation, Formation, Formation. Formation is the one obvious conclusion of this assessment of needs, concerns and developments. The initial and ongoing formation of teachers and administrators and the formation of parents and guardians must be the central agenda item for every Catholic education community in Ontario. To be serious about formation means we no longer take this great gift of Catholic education for granted. To commit to formation means that we are ready and anxious to reflect on the call – on the vocation – of what it is to be a Catholic educator. A jubilee wish: That there might be a significant formation component to every Catholic education meeting for the first decade of the new millennium!

**“SCHOOLS TO BELIEVE IN – THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE”
Homily Delivered by Msgr. Dennis Murphy –
Catholic Education Week – 1999**

This week here in Ontario Catholic schools and parishes are celebrating Catholic Education Week. The theme for the week is “Schools To Believe In – The Difference We Make.” No one pretends that there are not flaws in our Catholic schools but their particular approach to education does offer something distinctive not only to our Church but to our society as well. It also helps us to understand our own faith and how we seek to live it.

In a unique way Catholic schools tell young people that they are worthwhile – and that, above all else, they are worthwhile because they are from God and that their life is a journey of return to God. Throughout all aspects of the Catholic school’s curriculum children hear echoed the message of today’s gospel: “You are my friends...I do not call you servants...because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.” And so Catholic schools tell children that they are valuable. Children hear repeatedly that at the heart of their lives there lives the spirit of God himself. They tell them that no young person lives on the margin of God’s love. In so doing Catholic schools tell young people who they really are.

In a world which suggests all too often that what is right, and true and good, is what is fashionable and what is hip. In a world which says that what counts is being cool. In this world Catholic schools keep repeating in all kinds of ways that truth and goodness are more important than what is cool.

Catholic schools do this in very distinctive ways. A keystone of Catholic education is that everyone of us is equal – not because of some law or Charter of Rights and Freedoms – but because each of us is created equal by a loving God. And because this is so, children learn – not only in Religion class – but in every subject that Christians cannot accept any political systems or policies which tend to grind up little people and leave them by the roadside.

There is distinctiveness as well when teachers tell students that sex is great, and wonderful, and sacred. And that it is not to be squandered or violated in casual relationships, but treasured and respected as part of the mysterious gift of life itself. In like fashion Catholic schools insist at every turn that life itself is an unmerited gift. That we are entrusted with life but do not own it. And that we are called to cherish and protect it in all its manifestations.

Two or three years ago the Catholic School Trustees’ Association commissioned some focus group research to determine how the Catholic school was perceived by the citizens of Ontario. Some of these focus groups were made up of Catholics, some of non-Catholics, some of them were older people and some of them younger people. Part of the research involved the facilitator asking the members of each group to speak the first word that came to their mind when they thought of Catholic schools. The word that far outstripped all other words as defining these schools, the word that came from both Catholics and non-Catholics, the word that came from both young and old was community.

After all is said and done Catholic schools are about creating small Christian communities which are meant to mirror the values of the home and the Church. This is the learning environment Catholic educators seek to create.

What these communities provide to students in this fragmented society of ours is a zone and a sense of personal stability. Amidst all of the many voices and messages with which young people are bombarded, amidst all they learn from the media, what they hear on Muchmusic, what they read in the newspapers and watch on television – amidst all these voices they need of a word and a voice which assures them some stability. They need some clear and uncompromising sense of identity which only community can offer.

What Catholic schools seek to offer to our young people is a message and a voice which speaks with consistency, coherence, and continuity. Young people, indeed all of us need such a sense of meaning when confronted with some of the apparently meaningless horror which we all experience, such as the tragedy which devastated so many school people, children and parents these past ten days in both Littleton, Colorado and Taber, Alberta.

In short, kids need a culture and environment that allows them, in all of the noise of the contemporary world to hear the whisper of the Spirit, the gentle urging of Jesus, the call of God. Perhaps they will not follow in the way of that word and that call today. Perhaps they will not even follow in its way tomorrow. But for all of their life they will have learned how to listen to God. They will

have spent many hours in a community which tells them who they really are – a community which ever echoes the word of Jesus in today's gospel, "You did not choose me, but I chose you." This finally is why Catholic schools are distinctive, and why they are schools to believe in. What these schools offer to our kids is a gift not only to our Church but to our society as well.

SISTER CLARE FITZGERALD TO THE CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMUNITY IN RENFREW, ONTARIO NOVEMBER, 1999.

There's a pressing need for Catholic educators in the province of Ontario to come together, to look at themselves, and what we are supposed to be doing in Catholic education. Look over the 20th Century...Two World Wars, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. We had the Holocaust, and now we're ending the century with Kosovo.

History, despite all its wrenching pain, cannot undo what has happened...and nobody can change the next century except educators. Politicians can't change it. Congress will never change anything.

The only people who have the power to change anything in the world are the educators. Why? Because we change people's minds. We give them new thoughts. And we say to them "this is not the way people should live."

So that you and I, teachers and educators, we are the most powerful people in the very best sense of that word, because we influence minds.

We tell children, "Hey, you don't have to live like that, that's not the way human beings treat one another". We change people's thinking...that's the power of an educator. Nobody has that but us. And that's what we've come here together today to celebrate.

The only thing that will save Catholic education – in Ontario or anywhere else – is Catholic education. In other words, you've got to really be *Schools to believe in!* You've got to be what you claim to be.

Unless you prove that you're different, distinctive, with something of value to offer then you'll not be tax supported. Remember, you are trying to function in a culture, in a political, social and economic milieu that challenges the very fundamental principles of your education system.

The very promise and meaning of Catholic education is embedded in spiritual, religious, and Catholic roots, and anything that threatens those roots will cause a profound disturbance in Catholic education.

We can't give up those religious Catholic roots and think we are going to survive. What are these roots we are talking about? What Catholic identity, what religious traditions? What claims can we make about our Catholic schools that show us to be different than other schools?

In our Catholic schools, we proclaim something. We happen to believe there's a God. And in today's world, that's a novelty. We believe in Him and we proclaim Him. And you have no philosophy of education, you have no pedagogy, you have no reason to enter the classroom unless you believe in that statement.

When I walk in a classroom as a Catholic teacher, when I see my students, I have to know that each one of them is a child of God, created by God, for God, and that they are destined to go home to God. If you do not believe that, you're in the wrong school. I believe there's a God and that we're all going home. This whole journey on this earth is a journey home to God. That's the whole basis of our educational system. We are here to nourish that child on the journey home.

As well as proclaim, we must provide. In every one of our schools we must provide space and time for the sacred, for the holy. Retreat time, prayer time. We also must provide space and time for the academics. To be Catholic is to be intellectual. As educators, this means we've got to love learning – that's the ballpark we're playing in.

We must proclaim and provide, and as Catholic schools we must also promote. We promote social justice. We promote a better world. There is an essential difference between Catholic education and public education. We both educate the child and transform the child. But Catholic educators also educate the child to transform the world. The goal and objective of Catholic education is the world. It is not the child. We are called to influence the world. Jesus Christ said go into the world and proclaim me. The world is the goal and the focus of our education systems. That child is being educated morally and ethically with the concept of social justice and peace to go out into that world and make a difference.

I encourage my students to become good lawyers and doctors and architects. They can climb the social ladder. They can even earn lots of money. But I need them to remember why they're doing it, and I want them to challenge a marketplace ethic that enriches the wealthy and impoverishes the poor. "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world if in the end he loses his immortal soul?" That question is as good today as it was two centuries ago, but who's going to ask them that question if we don't?

As Catholic educators, that question is part of our job.

* *Sister Clare Fitzgerald is a teacher who has taught in elementary schools, in secondary and in post-graduate courses. She is a member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She has served as provincial Superior of her Congregation and was elected president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious of the United States. She was one of the five religious to serve on the Vatican Commission for the Study of Religious Life in the United States.*

Reprinted with permission

CATHOLIC SCHOOL VALUES

Daniel M. Buechlein

America, April 24, 1999 – Vol. 180, No. 14

We place enormous value on our Catholic schools and work hard to foster the faith tradition which has supported them in this country since before the foundation of the republic. At a time when the success of Catholic schools is so widely admired, it might be well to reflect on those values that make these schools Catholic and what they mean to us as individuals, families and communities, understanding that Catholics are not the only ones who reverence these values.

I am not going to list all the things that we Catholics believe, although this rich tradition of faith is the foundation that supports every Catholic school. I am also not going to discuss those values that are unique to the teaching and practice of the Catholic Church. Instead, I would like to mention briefly 10 values that we Catholics share with many other religious traditions. These values may not be unique to Catholic schools, but they are deeply imbedded in everything that our schools stand for – in our teaching, in our character formation, in athletics and in all our extracurricular activities. We don't claim to be perfect, or without fault, in our witness to these values, but we also don't try to "water them down" simply because they are difficult or counter-cultural.

What are these 10 Catholic school values? I'm sure that you will recognize them right away.

1. The first value is that *God comes first*. No individual or group, no doctrine or ideology, no material thing or spiritual experience can come before God. We believe in a personal, loving God who has been revealed through creation, through human conscience and through direct action in the world and in our lives. Catholic schools do not impose this belief (or any of our values) on people who do not share our faith. But everything about Catholic schools should proclaim this fundamental conviction or value. For us, God comes first.
2. The second value that Catholic schools represent is *reverence for the sacred*. We believe that a person is not fully human or truly free unless he or she can recognize and respect genuine spiritual realities. We want our Catholic school graduates to be keenly aware of the mysteries of life – at the same time that they are fully prepared for life's practical, day-to-day realities. We believe that the very name of the Lord is holy, and we try to teach our students (and ourselves) that true wisdom involves a sense of majesty, awe and reverence for the things of God.
3. The third Catholic school value reflects a theme that Pope John Paul II has recently stressed: *the importance of Sunday, the Lord's Day*. Time is sacred, the Pope reminds us. We honour God and one another when we set aside at least one day each week for prayer, worship and the kinds of leisure activities that truly enrich individuals, families and communities. Catholic schools promote responsible stewardship of the gift of time. We believe that healthy individuals and communities learn how to balance work and play with worship and service to others.

4. Fourth, we value *parents and families*. We recognize the family as the first unit of the Church and of society. We even call families the “domestic Church.” And we want to do everything in our power to help families remain spiritually vital, as well as materially secure, in spite of the many social and cultural influences that threaten family life today. Especially today, we want our Catholic schools to reflect a deep reverence and respect for the senior members of our community – our parents and grandparents- who have given so much to our families and communities and who still have so much more to offer us as a result of their wisdom and experience.
5. The fifth Catholic school value is absolutely central to who we are and what we believe. Catholic schools proclaim *the dignity and sacredness of every human person* – from the first moment of conception to the final moments of natural death. We believe that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God. We treat our students, their families and every member of the school community as unique and gifted persons – regardless of race, religion or economic or social circumstance. We want every child to have a chance – and every parent to have a choice – in the great adventure that education is meant to be. Above all, we want to communicate to our students the profound respect for life that we believe is at the heart of all truly human values.
6. The sixth Catholic school value is a *positive understanding of the beauty and dignity of human sexuality*. At a time when we are overwhelmed by negative sexual images in the news media and the entertainment industry, this may be our most counter-cultural value. We believe that God created human sexuality to unite man and woman in a sanctified married life and to bring forth new life in the stability and harmony of family life. Seen in this context, there is nothing more wondrous or joyful than sexual love. But we also know that, divorced from marriage and family, sex can be very dangerous and destructive. This is the view of sex that we want to share with our children – through clear, consistent teaching and through programs that emphasize abstinence, chastity and a true appreciation for this precious gift from God.
7. The seventh value is *respect for the material world* that God has entrusted to our care as stewards of all creation.. This value acknowledges that each of us has a right – and a duty – to care for our own property and possessions, but also for the great bounty we have received from God’s goodness: the land we work, the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat (and share with others). We believe that God has made us stewards of the earth and its fullness. That is why we respect one another’s property. It is also why we commit ourselves to economic justice and political responsibility among all nations and people of the earth.
8. The eighth Catholic school value is to *tell the truth*. Pope John Paul II has written forcefully about the splendour of truth and its essential connection to human freedom. Lies deceive, corrupt and enslave us. Invariably they cause pain, embarrassment and humiliation for everyone involved. We believe in telling the truth, but we also believe in charity and respect for the privacy of others. Talk shows and tabloid journalism do not serve the truth when they “tell all” without regard to the good and safety of others, or when they fail to have respect for privacy or the common good. In an age when doublespeak and spin doctoring are everywhere, we can give our children no greater gift than a profound appreciation for the plain, unvarnished truth.

9. The last two Catholic school values speak directly to the human heart. The ninth value is *purity of heart*, which involves honesty, simplicity and genuine desire for what is right and good. In human relationships, this means treating others with dignity and respect. It also means resisting the temptation to treat other people as objects that we use to gratify our personal needs or desires.
10. The final Catholic school value is also a counter-cultural value. It is the very opposite of the modern belief that happiness will come from acquiring (and consuming) more and more of what the world has to offer. A heart that is burdened by a consuming desire for wealth, prestige or power will never be free. We believe that true happiness comes when *we let go of our attachment to worldly things* and honestly turn our attention to the things of the spirit. So the tenth Catholic school value is “to seek first the kingdom of God,” confident that all the rest will follow.

Of course you recognize these 10 values. We call them the Ten Commandments. They are not unique to Catholic schools. They come from the Hebrew Scriptures as a direct revelation from God to Moses, but they also reflect basic religious and moral principles that have guided countless peoples and cultures throughout human history. As such, we believe that these “natural laws” have been inscribed in the human heart by God as fundamental principles that should govern human behaviour.

These values are the foundation for every Catholic school curriculum. They also form the basis for our schools’ strong commitment to service in the Church and in the wider community. Because we are human, we are not perfect in our witness to these values. But we insist that they remain as fundamental principles that challenge all of us – students, parents, teachers, educators and religious leaders – to make these values our own and to share them joyfully with others.

We believe that schools built on this foundation make a difference. Better families, better businesses and better communities are the result.

The Church has reason to be grateful to all who work in our Catholic schools for their quiet but very powerful witness to these Catholic school values. And the Church is grateful for the prayers and financial support of the broad Catholic community. We can see that in a world so in need of values, our schools are making a difference. The Most Rev. Daniel M. Buechlein, O.S.B., is Archbishop of Indiannapolis

**“Reprinted with permission of America Press, Inc. copyright 2002 All Rights Reserved.
For subscription information, visit www.americanmagazine.org “**