Our Catholic Schools in California



A Stellar Past, A Robust Future

A Statement by the
California Catholic Conference of Bishops

CALIFORNIA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

1119 K Street ● Sacramento, CA 95814 ● www.cacatholic.org

We advocate – as a matter of justice – for the high quality education of every child. We affirm each parent's right, and the responsibility, to direct their childrens' education. We support an exceptional K-12 teaching force serving all California's students. We believe educational reforms are best realized closest to actual learning experiences.

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> "The Catholic school community, therefore, is an irreplaceable source of service, not only to the pupils and its other members, but also to society. 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."
>
> *The Catholic School*
> The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977

Introduction

While the quote above is true for all communities, it is especially true across California: Catholic schools do create true communities from common effort in order to provide for the common good. As the bishops of California, representing the twelve dioceses of our state, we commit ourselves to fostering the ongoing development of Catholic schools in each of our dioceses. Now, more than ever, we are convinced of the importance of Catholic schools and we are committed to forming new disciples of Jesus Christ, to passing on the faith we have received to the next generation, and to educating the whole person through quality education that integrates religious truths and values while respecting the integrity of each academic discipline. We are committed to further developing the Catholic identity and environment of our schools and to assuring parents of the sound teaching their children receive. We are committed to filling every desk in every Catholic school and to educating as many Catholic children as possible. We are committed to making our schools as accessible and affordable as possible for the diverse multi-cultural and multi-lingual communities that comprise the Catholic Church in California. We are committed to forming and educating Catholic leaders for the Church and for society.

In the United States, the Catholic school continues to be one of the Church's most effective instruments for passing on the faith from one

generation to the next (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2014). This is especially true for the millennial generation (born after 1982) where individuals are nearly eight times more likely to attend Mass one or more times per week than those adults who did not attend a Catholic school (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2014). The California Catholic Conference of Bishops affirm the dedicated work currently taking place in our Catholic schools in California and express our desire to see this valuable resource supported, nurtured and grown in the future so that they may continue to serve students for generations to come. We recognize and express our deep gratitude to the current educators and parents who are committed to Catholic schools today, as well as our appreciation and admiration for the numerous religious communities who built and sustained Catholic schools in the State of California over its history.

In addition, we recognize and celebrate the tremendous value that Catholic schools bring to the state of California as a whole. Today, despite many challenges, California's Catholic schools educate over 200,000 children across the state. There is a need in society, and a great desire among parents—whether Catholic or not—to have their children receive an education that focuses not only on the intellect but on the spiritual and moral person as well. An education that is focused on the whole person results in a society that is more just and hopeful, and results in greater civic engagement and a populace that is more participatory in state and local governance.



As bishops we are very conscious of the shoulders on which we stand, of the valuable resource that we have inherited and for which we are now responsible, and we are equally aware of the unique history and character of Catholic schools in the United States. Our schools are unlike those of any other country and, as inheritors of their history and recipients of their success, we are also responsible for their future. It is for these reasons that we are addressing this statement on Catholic schools to the lay faithful who worship in our parishes, to the clergy and religious who are called to serve and evangelize and to state and civic leaders, since Catholic schools provide a benefit to California as a whole.

The Catholic Church supports universal education as the basis of preparing individuals not only to make their way in this life, but also for

entering into eternal life. This idea is implicit in all forms of Catholic education and is the foundation for all types of schools, both in the Church and in society. Catholic schools also ensure that students are educated in a way that brings joy, peace and hope to our society and that they work as adults to make our state and our world more humane and just. As bishops representing the twelve dioceses in California, we renew our pledge to ensure that Catholic schools continue to educate students who will become leaders who positively impact our Church, as well as Californian society, for decades to come.

Please note that the terms Latino and Hispanic are used interchangeably throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

Questions for Further Discussion

In the first paragraph, the California bishops have pledged several commitments for the future of Catholic schools. Which of these commitments most resonate with you? From your role in the Church and/or in the community, how can you support and assist in the realization of these commitments? What actions can you personally undertake to honor the stellar past of Catholic schools and contribute to their robust future?

Section I
To the Clergy and Lay Faithful

> "The Mission of the Catholic school is the integral formation of students, so that they may be true to their condition as Christ's disciples and as such work effectively for the evangelization of culture and for the common good of society."
>
> - *St. John Paul II*

As bishops in California, we recognize that the ministry of Catholic schools is not solely a parochial concern but a concern and a ministry of the entire diocese. The responsibility for maintaining, fostering and developing our Catholic schools does not belong solely to the local parish that has a school, nor to pastors of parishes with schools, nor to Catholic parents with school-aged children. Rather, this responsibility belongs to every parish, whether having a school or not, to every priest, whether a pastor with a school or not, and to every Catholic whether or they have school-aged children or not. Because the character or our children is one of the core concerns of our Catholic schools, the responsibility for forming future Catholic leaders belongs to all Catholics.

Concerned about the environment of much of public education, the shifting standards of society, and inadequate moral and values instruction in public schools, many Catholic families make significant sacrifices to enroll their children in a Catholic school. They appreciate, in particular, the commonality of values, the faith-inspired environment, the community atmosphere, the supportive individual attention accorded their children, and the collaborative relationship between parents and teachers that the Catholic school provides.

In addition, there is a genuine concern among a growing number of families about passing on the faith to their children. New research from The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) looks at the millennial generation (born in 1982 or later) of baptized Catholics, and finds that 24% reported having no religious education of any kind and 44% having sacramental preparation only.

Statistically, those who never attended a Catholic school are more likely to leave the Church after becoming an adult, even if they attended Mass regularly with their families during their formative years. By contrast, religious commitment during childhood and the teenage years, if reinforced by attending a Catholic school, is directly correlated to remaining lifelong members of the Church (CARA, 2014):

Of those who never attended a Catholic school, only 5% continued to attend Mass on a regular basis after reaching maturity, compared to 34% of those who attended a Catholic elementary school and 39% who attended a Catholic high school. Of this same group, 66% of those who never attended a Catholic school received the sacrament of Confirmation, compared to 82% of those who attended a Catholic elementary school and 91% of those who attended a Catholic high school.

When these "Millennials" were asked whether they'd ever considered a vocation to the priesthood or consecrated life, 26% of the boys who attended a

Catholic school 16% of the girls responded affirmatively, in contrast to 9% of boys and 6% of girls who never attended a Catholic school. The report concluded the "long-term benefits of Catholic schools in making Mass attendance more likely and helping ensure [that] young Catholics are confirmed (and remain Catholic as adults), along with the importance these institutions play in fostering Catholic leaders, likely outweigh many short-term financial considerations." The Catholic Church would only be weakened by any significant future loss of Catholic schools.



As bishops, we are committed to seeing Catholic schools grow and thrive so as to continue to serve families and students in California. We recognize that all of us connected to Catholic school education stand on the shoulders of giants, primarily orders of women religious, who built and nurtured the system of schools that has effectively educated generations in California and across the United States. In acknowledgment of that stellar service, we are further compelled to diligently work to promote our schools' growth and success, and ensure the best days of our history are continually on the horizon.

Educating students who value and know their Catholic faith is vital to the future of the Church. We know that the Catholic school will become an ever-more-important tool for faith formation, evangelization and ensuring the literacy in the faith.

Because we are committed to our Catholic schools, we ask you, our priests, to be committed as well; to recognize the importance of your support and your influence in promoting our schools and encouraging families to enroll their children. We ask you, our priests, to be champions of our Catholic schools, even if you are not presently assigned to a parish with a school, and to identify from among the faithful you serve the Catholic leaders for tomorrow and to find a way for these future leaders to attend a Catholic school.

From you, the lay faithful of the Church whom we are privileged to serve, we ask your commitment as well: to pass on your faith to the next generation of disciples, and to support our Catholic schools with your time, treasure and talent. We ask your commitment to sending your children and grandchildren to a Catholic school and if needed, to replicate the sacrifices our parents and grandparents made in sending so many of us to a Catholic school when their own resources were often so limited.

We ask that you recommend Catholic school to your family members, friends, and associates, in recognition of the important service Catholic schools provide as a ministry not only of the local parish, and not only of parents with school age children, but of the entire Church. And we ask you to commit yourselves to identifying the Catholic leaders of tomorrow and helping them find their place in a Catholic school.

Questions for Further Discussion

Clergy: What are the long-term benefits of Catholic schools for individuals and families, for the parish, for the diocese and for the entire Church? As a member of the clergy, what is my responsibility to support, sustain and promote Catholic schools, whether or not my current assignment includes a Catholic school? What role should I be playing to support and promote Catholic schools? In what ways do I currently encourage the parishioners with whom I interact to support and/or enroll their children in a Catholic school? What more could I be doing?

Laity: If you are a parent of school age children, what would encourage you to enroll your children in a Catholic school; what can your local priest and the (arch)diocese do to encourage and support your desire to enroll your children in a Catholic school? If you currently do not have school age children, what should you be doing to encourage and enable families with school-age children to send their children to a Catholic school; what can you do to ensure that Catholic schools have a sustained and vibrant future in service to the Church and to society?

Section II
To Civic and State Leaders

> "School [is] a journey that enables you to learn three languages that a mature person should know how to express: the language of the mind, the language of the heart and the language of the hands. Harmoniously though, that is, to think what you feel and what you do; to feel deeply what you think and what you do; and to do well what you think and what you feel. Three languages, together in harmony!"
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> *Pope Francis*, 2014

The above quote from Pope Francis exemplifies the value our Catholic schools bring to the civic life of the State of California. For nearly two centuries Catholic schools have successfully provided quality education in a faith-filled environment that values the dignity of each individual student. Although they primarily serve Catholic students, Catholic schools are open to educating students of all faiths, so that all children may learn how religion contributes to the overall common good of society and learn to respect the value of religion in society. California's Catholic schools have not only educated the mind and intellect, but the heart as well, enabling those students who attend Catholic schools go on to lead lives of service to others. The harmony of the 'three languages' has not only brought great value to the Church, but to California and the nation as well.

Catholic schools exist with the purpose of educating those Catholics who will exercise leadership at every level and in every community from their local church, the local neighborhood, school, and place of employment to positions of prominence and influence in business, industry, science, the arts, education, medicine, government, jurisprudence, and entertainment.

Catholic schools form the conscience and inform the actions of Catholics who will be leaders—both formally and informally—through their positions in society, and by the example of their personal lives as citizens and participants in the social realm.

Moreover, the benefits of Catholic schools extend far beyond the Catholic community to the entire state as a whole: Many of the leaders of our state and country have reaped the rewards of a Catholic school education, either in elementary, in secondary or in college, and have as a result been exposed to moral teachings that ground them to be ethical leaders for society. The impact of that education is evident in professional and intellectual realm, as well as in the character and philosophy of these leaders.

The positive and important influence of Catholic schools is evident among educators as well: There are approximately 350,000 teachers in California, and with almost 17,000 dedicated to the education of Catholic school students entrusted to their care, Catholic school teachers have proved themselves to be an invaluable part of our state's teaching force.

Because Catholic schools strive to educate in the faith all who wish to attend, including those newly arrived immigrants seeking a better life in America, the model of the parochial Catholic school serving an immigrant population has benefited the American church and society for nearly two hundred years. A hundred years

ago that immigrant population was mostly made up of Europeans fleeing hunger and hardship to find a better life in the United States. In California today, we welcome immigrants from Mexico, South America, Asia and Africa.



The benefits of a Catholic school education for these often underserved, minority, and ethnic communities are considerable, in particular for African American, Latino, and Native American students, and especially here in California. Nevertheless, recognizing that 9 out of 10 of our Catholic children are enrolled in public schools, we as bishops share a vested interest in the quality of public and charter schools.

There is, however, impressive data on the effectiveness of Catholic schools

For Latino students in Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, for example, the high school graduation rate is 97.5%, compared to a 66% high school graduation rate for Latino students in Los Angeles public elementary schools (Huchting, K. K., Martin, S. P., Chavez, J. M, Holyk-Casey, K., & Ruiz, D., 2014). Similar results can be found throughout the dioceses of California. An African American or Latino child is 42% more likely to graduate from high school and 2.5 times more likely to graduate from college if he or she attends a Catholic school (Neal, 1997). Moreover, those adults who attended Catholic schools in their formative years tend to be better educated and earn higher-than-average incomes, and are more likely to vote than public school graduates (Dee, 2005).

Catholic schools tend to produce graduates who are more civically engaged, more tolerant for diverse views, and more committed to service as adults (Campbell, 2001; Greeley & Rossi, 1966; Greene, 1998; Wolf, Greene, Kleitz, & Thalhammer, 2001). From a strictly financial perspective, Catholic schools educate over 200,000 California students in grades K-12 each year, which saves the state over $2 billion each year in educational costs.

A 2008 study of African American students in Catholic schools concluded that Catholic schools present a caring culture with administrators and teachers taking a deep interest in students both academically and personally. Catholic schools are able to develop within the students a sense of personal responsibility for their own learning. In this same study the students themselves cite the experience of the Catholic school as the academic foundation for their success (Bempechat, 2008).

For these reasons, we are extremely proud of our Catholic schools. We recognize that they are essential, not only for the growth of the Catholic Church in California, but also for the growth and sustainability of the state as a whole. In one sense, our Catholic schools are 'public' schools since they educate the general public and the students who attend are destined to be contributing members of society. We welcome and encourage partnership with our state and local leaders in order to ensure these schools of excellence thrive in the years to come. And we challenge our state and civic leaders to recognize and respect what Catholic schools bring to California and society as a whole and we ask that you support them so that they continue to bring about the common good throughout the state.

Questions for Further Discussion

Everyone: How would society be affected if all or the majority of Catholic schools were to close? What would be the result if Catholic schools were to disappear from the urban, low socioeconomic neighborhoods where they have served for generations and have positively impacted the lives of a great many students? In the book*, Lost Classroom, Lost Community* (2014), the authors empirically demonstrate that the closure of a local Catholic school in an urban environment triggers an increase of social disorder in the surrounding neighborhood; from your place and role in the local community and/or in the State, what steps should you responsibly be taking to ensure that Catholic schools in low socioeconomic neighborhoods remain effective civic institutions with community and State support?

Elected Officials: Through taxation, the general public, including low and middle income families, support schools in all neighborhoods, including high-income areas with wealthier families; should there be some form of tax relief for families who carry the additional burden of tuition costs for their children to attend a Catholic school? Research demonstrates that Catholic schools are effective and reliable environments for fostering the civic engagement of citizens; as an elected official, what is your responsibility for the common good to provide Catholic school children, families, and teachers with resources and public policy support?



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Section III
Action Plan Strategy for Growth and Sustainability

> "Do not be content with what you are, if you want to become what you are not yet. For where you have grown pleased with yourself, there you will remain. But if you say, 'that's enough', you are finished. Always add something more, keep moving forward, always make progress."
>
> *St. Augustine*

We, the California Catholic Conference of Bishops, recognize the rich history and great success of Catholic schools across the United States and, especially in our state. In order that California Catholic schools continue to grow and make progress, we establish the following directives, in support of our intent and expectation that Catholic schools in California will continue to excel and serve students and families for generations to come.

Directive I

We direct our pastors and school personnel to review their admissions policies and focus their recruitment effort on enrolling a greater number of Catholic children.

Rationale: The Church does not establish schools solely for the purpose of operating schools. Establishing schools was not the command of Christ. The mission of Christ, and therefore the mission of the Church, is to proclaim the good news, to evangelize. Schools have always been instruments of the Church's mission to evangelize in the broader sense of that term. Over the past two centuries, bishops, pastors and communities of religious women and men established schools not only to serve mainstay members of the Church, but also to serve the poor, the immigrant, and the marginalized, welcoming non-Catholics as well as the children of Catholic families. Out of the conviction that all truth comes from God and is compatible with Church teaching, the purpose of Catholic schools was not to proselytize and convert the non-Catholic, but to teach what is true and instill values compatible with the gospel message, allowing each academic discipline its own integrity. In this framework there was a twofold understanding of evangelization –catechizing Catholic students and drawing non-Catholic students into an awareness of God's presence and action in the world and in their lives.

Today, we are underserving the Catholic school age population in many dioceses across the state. For example, in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the Catholic children currently enrolled in Catholic schools are fewer than 1 in

10. If the percentage were to increase to 10% or 20% it would result in tens of thousands of more students attending Catholic schools.

Conclusion: Without relinquishing the value of educating and evangelizing all students, our primary focus in operating Catholic schools must be to educate and form Catholic leaders, both formal and informal, for the Church and for society. Therefore, our primary attention must be given to educating children from Catholic families. Pastors especially should be mindful of active families at their parishes who don't currently have their children in a Catholic school. They should do everything they can to support and assist those families in accessing a Catholic school education.

Questions for Further Discussion

Clergy: As a priest, especially if you are a priest in parochial ministry, what should you be doing to assure that the children in your parish who ought to be in a Catholic school are in a Catholic school?

Laity: As a parent or family member, what would motivate you to send your children to a Catholic school and what would deter you? As a member of the Catholic laity, what can you do to encourage, support, and enable Catholic families to enroll their children in a Catholic school?

Directive II

We direct all pastors and parish religious education directors to identify students from their parish programs who are likely candidates for a Catholic school and invite their families to consider enrolling their children. Pastors should seek to provide financial assistance, if necessary, to such families and encourage enrollment in their own parish, if there is a Catholic school, or in a neighboring parish if there is not.

Rationale: In the 2013 school year, 394,000 students were enrolled in Catholic religious education programs across the state and another 213,000 students attended Catholic schools. Given a small number of students who were double counted because they attended Catholic schools and were also enrolled in parish sacrament programs, there still remains a vast pool of students (some 180,000) who are candidates for enrollment in a Catholic school. It should be noted that this reality here differs from other areas in the United States, and is a great source of optimism about our future—both with regard to Catholic education and for the Church as a whole.

Fifty years ago nearly every desk in every Catholic school was filled, with little need for active recruitment. The approach then was, "If you build it, they will come." This is not the case today. Thus there must be a focus on inviting those parents and families who are actively involved in parish life, but do not have their children enrolled in the Catholic school.

A number of parishes across the state do not have an attached Catholic school. Nonetheless every parish has children and youth who should be in a Catholic school, especially those with the best potential to be Catholic

leaders in the future. Generally, especially on the elementary level, pastors have not been encouraged to recruit students for a Catholic school outside their own parish.

Conclusion: There is a considerable pool of candidates for our Catholic schools, but most will not enroll unless they are recruited and invited. Those who are already involved in parish religious education programs are prime candidates for enrollment in Catholic school since, to some degree, they are already making the effort to live their Catholic faith more fully. A goal for each parish could be established (for example 10%), which would be reasonable to attain, and would allow both the parish religious education program and the Catholic school to be sustained.

Every pastor, not solely those who have a parish school, has a responsibility to make a Catholic school education available to the children of his parish and should provide financial assistance, if possible, to ensure that it occurs.

Questions for Further Discussion

Clergy: In light of research that indicates that adults who attended Catholic schools earlier in their lives are more likely to practice their faith than those who did not, what is the responsibility of a pastor without a Catholic school to encourage the families in his parish to send their children to a neighboring Catholic school? What is the responsibility of all clergy to identify children who are good prospects for Catholic education and to encourage and financially assist their parents to enroll them in a Catholic school?

Laity: What is the responsibility of Catholic parents and grandparents to assure the best possible Catholic school education for their children and grandchildren? What factors, such as cost, quality of education, and distance, make it less likely that your children and grandchildren will attend a Catholic school?

Directive III

We direct the superintendents of our dioceses to take a proactive role and assist the pastors and principals of our parishes and schools in making the school more desirable, accessible and affordable for Latino families, as well as in methods of recruiting enrollment from Latino families. The approach should be cultural in concept to connect with the community and family commitment of Latino families so they see the Catholic school both as the best vehicle to educate their children, and the option that best aligns with their own cultural values.

Rationale: There are approximately 15 million Latinos in the state of California, a number that surpasses the white, non-Latino population, and the majority of them are Catholic. Compared with other states, California has a much higher percentage of Latino students attending Catholic schools, 25% versus 15%. In the southern part of California the number exceeds 40%. Still many Latino families do not enroll their children in a Catholic school for a variety of reasons – the cost is prohibitive for them; they see the school as private and elitist and not meant for them; they are unfamiliar with the atmosphere of the school and do not feel comfortable or welcome there;

they have not been invited or encouraged to enroll their children. As a result, this population represents a vast pool of potential students for our Catholic schools.

There is considerable literature available on ways to make the Catholic school more desirable, accessible and affordable for Latino families. Moreover, research has shown that the one person who can most influence Latino families to enroll their children in a Catholic school is their parish priest.

Conclusion: There is great potential for increasing the Latino enrollment in our schools, but it will remain unrealized unless diocesan offices and schools are intentional in their efforts to become more culturally accessible, as well as more affordable. Additional resources should be provided to assist Latino families in accessing their local Catholic schools and everyone in the church should assist in garnering those resources. Additionally, pastors must become proactive in the recruitment of Latino students because it is clear they have great influence with the families.

Questions for Further Discussion

Clergy: How can the clergy, especially pastors and associate pastors, become more proactive in recruiting Latino students to attend Catholic schools? Currently, how are you proactively recruiting Latino students and families to enroll their children in your school or in a neighboring Catholic school? The *Madrinas* program promoted by the University of Notre Dame empowers current Latino Catholic school families to recruit other Latino families to enroll their children; how can you engage the current Latino families in your school community to promote your school among families of children who do not attend a Catholic school?

Laity: As a Latino Catholic family, what deters you from enrolling your children in a Catholic school and what would encourage you to do so? How can the general Catholic population better encourage Latino Catholic families to enroll their children in a Catholic school?

Directive IV

We direct the superintendents of Catholic schools to engage pastors, school personnel, and local leaders in studying emerging forms of school governance and determining the best operative model for the advancement of each school.

Rationale: While many Catholic schools retain their parochial character as an integral part of the parish, drawing the majority of their students from the sponsoring parish, and involving families in the full life of the parish, many others today no longer fit the parochial model under which they were created.

A deep and abiding connection with a parish remains the ideal, but many parochial schools have become regional or commuter schools, drawing their students from a number of parishes while relying heavily on the resources of the sponsoring parish in which the families are not involved and contributing very little to the parochial life of that parish. As a result, the school becomes disconnected both from the sponsoring parish and from the parishes to which the students' families actually belong. Pastors of sponsoring parishes complain that

they never see school families at Sunday Mass, that the resources of their parishes are being consumed in operating a school for children of other parishes, and that the pastors of neighboring parishes offer little assistance, financial or otherwise, for the operation of the school. The pastors of the neighboring parishes do not share a sense of responsibility for the maintenance and success of the school and usually are not invited to share in the governance of the school, and object that they receive little or no information about their children who attend a school in another parish, that they are not invited to share in the governance of the school which the children of their parish attend, and that the current parochial model excludes them from participation.



To address these challenges, dioceses across the state are experimenting with and implementing new forms of school governance. The Diocese of Sacramento, for example, has undertaken a complete revision of the former systematic approach to structuring and governing its schools and today sponsors three separate educational corporations with three distinct models of school governance.

Conclusion: We, as a Church, need to rethink our approach to organizing, governing, supporting, and developing our various systems of Catholic schools in each of our dioceses. We need to reeducate ourselves as to the purpose and manner of operating our Catholic schools. We need to rethink who we educate and why. We need to find new ways of insuring that the Catholic children who should be in our schools because they are destined to be Catholic leaders in the church and in society, are, in fact, enrolled in our schools and assisted, as individually needed, to remain in our schools.

The new reality is that in very many instances, our schools have outgrown the established parochial model, and new forms of governance are needed. There is a need to embrace emerging models of collaboration and school ownership among parishes whose students attend the same school together. Such changes will also be an incentive for pastors without a parish school to recruit their students to attend a school elsewhere in which their parish shares in governance and for which their parish shares ownership, investment and responsibility.

Questions for Further Discussion

Clergy: What governance models (for example, parochial, diocesan, co-sponsored, regional, corporate) for the Catholic schools in your deanery or area would best suit the needs and expectations of the pastors, other clergy, and laity of neighboring parishes?

Laity: How well does the current governance model of the Catholic schools in your area respond to the needs and expectations of parents and of the general Catholic laity? If a different model would seem better suited to the needs of Catholic families in your area, what model would you suggest?

Directive V

We direct our superintendents to work with all pastors in developing a variety of strategies for funding the tuition of deserving students. We also direct our state conference to continue working with our partners in developing and passing a program of tax incentives on a statewide basis and expanding opportunities for early childhood education and for the preparation of teachers and administrators.



Rationale: As a vehicle for the evangelizing mission of the Church, the purpose of Catholic schools is to educate and form Catholic leadership for the future. The reality is, however, that for many students who should be in a Catholic school because of their leadership potential and the strong Catholic environment of their homes, their families simply cannot afford a Catholic school education. Across the United States various creative solutions have been found to make it possible for deserving students to enroll in a Catholic school. Some exist on a parochial level where scholarships are solicited and provided by the parish or by parishioners through donations and fundraising. Some exist on a diocesan level, such as the stewardship model enacted by the Diocese of Wichita, Kansas, where the entire diocese contributes to the free education of Catholic students. Others exist on the state and federal levels where multiple legislative initiatives have been undertaken to fund parental choice in the education of children, authorizing the use of tax dollars or tax incentives for families and businesses in support of the parents' right to select the best education for their children.

Conclusion: There is no one approach that will work entirely to make a Catholic school education affordable for all deserving students. Rather, it will take a combination of creative approaches that include parental responsibility, parish and school scholarship opportunities, tax incentives and legislative initiatives, foundation support and endowment efforts. Across the nation and among our own dioceses there are numerous best practices in this regard that should be shared and utilized.

Questions for Further Discussion

Clergy: What contribution should a parish be making toward providing a Catholic school education for children of deserving Catholic families and of families who desire a Catholic education for their children, especially for families who are financially unable to meet the full cost of the established tuition? Some parishes across the United States, and in several dioceses all parishes, tithe their ordinary income to support Catholic schools, especially Catholic schools in low socioeconomic areas; what are your thoughts on this practice in light of the social justice commitment and evangelizing mission of the Church?

Laity: In a number of states outside California, state-funded resources currently provide students who attend Catholic schools with such benefits as on-campus nurses, textbooks and instructional materials, bus transportation, and diagnostic and therapeutic services. Even states with constitutions that rigorously restrict aid to private schools provide Catholic and private school parents with tax credits and/or deductions, opportunity scholarships, and dedicated savings accounts that support them in the education of their children. What can you do to provide for and ensure the availability of similar public policy benefits for Catholic school families?

Directive VI

We direct those responsible for the ongoing education of the clergy in each of our dioceses to form in our priests an awareness of their responsibility to be champions of our Catholic schools. Likewise, we direct our pastors to encourage parishioners to support and fund both religious education programs and Catholic schools as an expression of their responsibility to pass on the faith to the next generation.

Rationale: In very many cases, our Catholic schools no longer function as parochial schools. Rather, many have become inter-parochial, regional, or diocesan schools. Increasingly, the operation of Catholic schools is a ministry of the entire diocese and not solely of the individual parish and should be a concern of every priest and every Catholic. Many priests do not recognize their responsibility for the successful operation of Catholic schools not attached to the parishes of their assignments. Likewise, most often Catholic laity do not recognize the correlation between the responsibility of all Catholics to pass on the faith and the responsibility of all Catholics to support both religious education programs and Catholic schools.

Conclusion: Every priest needs to develop an awareness of his responsibility to be a champion of Catholic schools, identifying children who should be attending, and directing them toward enrollment, even when the school is located in another parish. Also, parallel to the fact that all taxpayers fund public education should be the awareness that not only parents of school age children, but all Catholics are responsible for funding Catholic schools.

Questions for Further Discussion

Clergy: How well has your (arch)diocese done in communicating to you personally the value of Catholic School education and your own importance in the success of Catholic schools? To what extent are you aware of the work of the Education Committee of the California Catholic Conference Bishops in raising and addressing issues that concern all students and families across the State?

Laity: There is growing momentum across the nation to secure state and local funding to support private schools, including Catholic schools; at both local and state levels, how can you engage in support of this effort in the State of California?

Conclusion



Our California Catholic schools have a stellar past, and they have been a substantial resource, not only for the Church, but for society as a whole. As we commit ourselves to support and promote our statewide network of Catholic schools, let all of us – clergy, laity, state and civic leaders – remember the blessing and gift that Catholic schools have been for generations of students, many of whom were newly arrived immigrants with dreams and hopes for a better future. They were educated by modern saints, primarily women religious, whose tireless effort and dedication ensured that their students grew strong in faith and intellect, and led lives of leadership and service to the common good.

Today, we, the bishops of California, are proud that our Catholic schools continue to educate all students, including the newly arrived immigrant and the often neglected student on the margins of society. We know that, with God's grace and our concerted, collaborative effort, California's Catholic schools have a robust future. The children we educate today will become tomorrow's leaders for both our Church and for society, for our schools are both a ministry of the Church, and serve the common good, and ultimately benefit the individual student, the whole Church, California, and our nation.

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