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The Mission of the Catholic School in the Pre-Vatican II Era (1810-1962) and the Post-Vatican II Era (1965–1995): Insights and Observations for the New Millennium

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The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was an ecumenical council of Catholic bishops from around the world. The bishops made changes both in the internal life of the Church (e.g., the sacraments and daily practices of Catholics) and in the approach that the Church took toward other religions and toward the secular world. These changes transformed the mission of the Church.

It is the purpose of this paper to examine how the mission of Catholic primary and secondary schools was transformed by this council. Since the time of the Second Vatican Council, concerns about declining enrollment and increasing costs (O'Keefe, 1996), as well as serious problems in retaining competent faculty and administrators (Breslin, 2000) have occupied the thoughts and prayer time of religious educators, especially but not exclusively those in urban areas (Archer, 1997). These immediate needs have sometimes supplanted a focus on mission. Catholic schools were founded to support the evangelical mission of the Church and are seen by many Catholics, both lay and clerical, as sharing in the "story" and the "vision" of the Church's tradition and mission (Groome, 1996). Thus, these distractions, while understandable, should not detract Catholic school leaders from the role that their schools have in fulfilling the mission of the Church.

This paper is divided into three parts. The first is an analysis of the mission of these schools before Vatican II (1810-1962). The second is an analysis of Catholic school mission in the post-Vatican II era (1965-1995). The third part is a tool to aid reflection on the Catholic mission of one's own school.

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The Mission of the Catholic School in the Pre-Vatican II Era (1810–1962)

In this section, the mission of the Catholic schools prior to 1962 (the start of the Second Vatican Council) will be examined. Catholic schools then, as now, varied in their missions, depending especially on the era and the populations that were being served. However, two dimensions of mission emerged during this time that characterized, in varying degrees, the mission of most Catholic schools: to catechize the Catholic population and to preserve the faith of Catholic, especially immigrant populations, from Protestant proselytizing. The next section will examine how these two dimensions changed in the years after the council.

There have been Catholic schools in what is now the United States since the 1600s. When the Franciscans established their missions in California, New Mexico, and Texas, coming up from Mexico, they established mission schools to catechize the indigenous population. This process of conversion and education was not always peaceful and voluntary (Knaut, 1995). In 1722, the French Capuchins established a school for boys in New Orleans, the capital of New France. Five years later, the Ursuline sisters opened Ursuline Academy in New Orleans. This school, which still exists (Ursuline Academy, 2008), had three divisions: a traditional convent boarding school for girls of the elite, a day school for the daughters of the merchant class, and a school to teach religion to Black and Native American children (Burns, 1912).

However, most people refer to the school established by Elizabeth Seton in Emmitsburg, Maryland, in 1810 as the first Catholic parochial school (Bryon, 1990). She opened this school at the request of Bishop John Carroll of Baltimore, the first Catholic bishop in the United States. Although in the years since many Catholic schools have opened and closed, this school, now named after Mother Seton, is still open (Mother Seton School, 2008). This school was founded in order to include religious values with formal education in what was then rural Maryland. Bishop Carroll recognized the need to provide a Catholic education for children in his diocese. Other Catholic schools, notably Saint Peter's School and Saint Patrick's School, in New York City, soon followed (Farley, 1908).

Very quickly, however, in the anti-Catholic atmosphere of the post colonial United States another purpose emerged. That purpose was to protect Catholic children from being proselytized by the Protestant majority. The danger that Catholic students who attended public schools would lose their faith was a concern of the American bishops at the First Provincial Assembly. This was apparent as early as 1829, when Baltimore was the only metropolitan see in

the United States and other dioceses (e.g., New York and Philadelphia) were suffragan sees of the province of Baltimore. Reaffirming the need for religious education, the bishops decreed that "We judge it absolutely necessary that schools be established in which the young may be taught the principles of faith and morality, while being instructed in letters" (Guilday, 1932, p. 94). However, the bishops also recognized that Catholic children who attended the public or common schools were placed in danger of losing their faith. The following decree (n. 35) authorized the founding of the Catholic Tract Society in order to publish books that would "correct the errors contained in many books used in the common schools" (Guilday, 1932, p. 94).

Four years later, in 1833, when the bishops met for the Second Provincial Assembly, they wrote again of their concern about children being instructed in faith and morals. This time, however, their admonition was in the context of protecting and safeguarding them.

> We have moreover sought to create colleges and schools in which your children, whether male or female, might have the best opportunities of literature and science, united to a strict protection of their morals and the best safeguards of their faith. (Nolan, 1984, p. 77)

The tone of this letter, as well as the tone of the pastoral letter written after the Third Provincial Assembly in 1837 was still conciliatory, stressing a need to safeguard faith and morals rather than correct the errors of the common schools: "It is our most earnest wish to make them as perfect as possible, in their fitness for the communication and improvement of science, as well as the cultivation of pure, solid, enlightened piety" (p. 111).

By the middle of the 19th century, the public schools were decidedly Protestant (Carper & Layman, 1995) and increasingly hostile to Catholics and their schools. For example, the Rev. Horace Bushnell (1971), in a homily delivered in North Church in Hartford, Connecticut, on March 25, 1853, proclaimed that "the true ideal state manifestly is, one school and one Christianity" (p. 188). He, as well as many Protestants, argued that Catholic schools were un-American because they keep "their children from being Americans" (p. 185).

There was a growing rift between Catholics and Protestants. In general, Protestants, who were the majority of the population of the United States, supported the public schools. These schools were seen as common schools, where all citizens would receive the same instruction in American and Christian virtues. Kane (1995) wrote

> The common schools that Horace Mann envisaged were designed to equalize opportunity for everyone, to create a level playing field, and to bring children from all walks of life together in order to prepare them for citizenship in a democracy. (p. 2)

Bible readings, hymns, and prayers were all part of the curriculum. These were meant to be nondenominational and, on Sundays, the children were to be taught the particular tenets of their faith in their churches (Carper & Layman, 1995).

On the surface, this does not seem offensive, until one realizes that the Catholic Church taught that the hierarchy was the infallible teacher of the Bible. Private reading and interpretation of the Scriptures were viewed as undermining that right (Lannie, 1968). The hymns and prayers used in the common schools were those common in the Protestant churches. On this account many Catholics, especially the members of the hierarchy, found the common schools to be offensive and desired to provide their own schools for Catholic children. That led to several attempts to seek compromise, as well as bitter divisions in some parts of the country.

Between 1833 and 1870, Bishop John Purcell of Cincinnati tried to cooperate with public schools by having Catholic students in public schools use Catholic Bibles in class and have religion classes taught by Catholics. Unfortunately, he was not successful in this effort. In Philadelphia in 1843, Bishop Francis Kenrick sought permission for Catholics to use the Catholic version of the Bible in public school class. The public school authorities responded by allowing students to use any Bible that they wished, provided that it was without commentary, and by excusing from Bible readings any students whose parents objected. Both solutions posed difficulty for Catholics. First, because the Catholic version had footnotes and commentary, Catholic students could not use Catholic Bibles and had to ask to be excused from the Bible readings and services. Second, since Bible reading and services were to many Protestants the core of the curriculum (Walch, 1996), Protestants vehemently objected, and this prompted 3 days of anti-Catholic rioting, during which two Catholic schools were burned.

While there was a growing bitterness on the part of many in the Catholic hierarchy toward the "godless" public schools, their leadership was not always followed by the Catholic laity. To the chagrin of the bishops, there was also growing support among the laity for these schools. Five thousand Catholic students attended New York City's public schools in 1840. By 1849, over half of the students in the school system were Catholics. In 1870, 22,000 Catholics were in attendance (Walch, 1996).

The Catholic presence in America was growing, and by the middle of the century it had become the largest single denomination in the country. Ahlstrom (1972) notes that as the Catholic presence grew, Catholics became more suspect to non-Catholics for a number of reasons. First, the United States historically was allied with Protestant England, whose rivals were Catholic France and Spain. Second, the strong Enlightenment philosophy on which the country was founded saw the Catholic Church as the most powerful institutionalization of medieval superstitions. Third, the growing strength of Catholicism threatened the Protestant power structures of the day. Finally, Catholic immigrants settled primarily in the cities, where they contributed to urbanization and the gradual shift of power from the traditional agrarian structures to urban centers.

As the number of Catholic immigrants increased in the United States, anti-Catholicism grew. The Know-Nothings political party grew stronger, and sought to deny public funds to all Catholic institutions. Representative James G. Blaine proposed an amendment to the United States Constitution prohibiting the use of public funds to support any institution, including schools, under the control of any religious sect or denomination. This amendment passed in the House, but failed in the Senate (Peterson, 1990). Many states, however, adopted versions of this amendment in their state constitutions, and all new states added to the Union were required to insert this amendment into their constitutions.

It was in this context that the American Catholic bishops met in Baltimore in 1884 for the Third Plenary Council. There was strong support at the council for Catholic schools, led by Archbishop Michael Heiss of Milwaukee and Bishops Joseph Dwenger of Fort Wayne and Bernard McQuaid of Rochester. There was also strong opposition from Bishop Edward Fitzgerald of Little Rock, Archbishop Ryan of Philadelphia, and Archbishop Freehan of Chicago (Gleason, 1987).

After much discussion, the bishops issued the following decree:

1. Near every church, where one does not already exist, a parochial school is to be erected within two years from the promulgation of this Council, and to be supported "in perpetuum," unless the Bishop decides it is to be delayed on account of grave difficulties.
2. A priest, who during this time obstructs by his grave neglect the building or maintaining of a school or does not obey after repeated admonitions of the Bishop, must be removed from that Church.
3. The mission or parish that so neglects its duty to help the priest in the building or maintaining of the school, that on account of this supine

negligence it is not possible to build the school, is to be reprimanded by the Bishop, and by this more efficacious and prudent manner persuaded to give the necessary support.

4. All Catholic parents are bound to send their children to parochial schools, unless either at home or in other Catholic schools they provide sufficiently and fully for their Christian education, or on account of a good reason approved by the Bishop, and with the appropriate precautions and remedies, they are allowed to send them to other schools. Which Catholic school, however, is to be left to the decision of the Ordinary. (Guilday, 1932, p. 912)

The support for Catholic schools was not as strong as these decrees might imply;

> Great leeway was left for episcopal discretion in determining whether a school was Catholic (which might permit compromises with the state), in disciplining pastors and congregations, and in allowing exceptions to parents who wished to send their children to non-Catholic schools. (Gleason, 1987, p. 133)

This leeway was written into the mandate because Archbishop Alemany of San Francisco and Bishop Edward Fitzgerald of Little Rock argued in favor of only urging each parish to open and maintain a school, but not mandating it. Their belief was that it was the duty of the pastor to teach religion only and it was the right of the parents to choose where their children were to receive education in secular subjects (Cassidy, 1948). As a result, the only way that the mandate was acceptable to the majority of bishops was by modifying it and allowing each bishop to make exceptions in his diocese.

The whole parish was urged in the third point to support the parochial school. This point was meant as a corrective for the "erroneous opinion in the mind of some of the laity...that the solicitude for the school was to be confined to that portion of the congregation actually and directly making use of it for their children" (Cassidy, 1948, p. 295). This corrective has obvious implications concerning the financial support for today's Catholic schools.

The fourth point mandates that parents are bound to send their children to Catholic schools. But, in order to pass by a vote of 41 to 33, it was necessary to allow exceptions to be made by the bishops. Also, by a vote of 37 to 32, the council decided not to impose the penalty of denial of absolution on those who sent their children to non-Catholic schools, as had been proposed by some bishops (Gleason, 1987).

When the bishops issued their decrees, a little more than one-third of all Catholic parishes had schools. There were 2,532 schools in 6,613 parishes (McAvoy, 1966). Sixteen years later, in 1900, there were almost 4,000 Catholic schools. In the next two decades an additional 4,103 schools would be opened. By 1966, the year in which the Catholic schools reached a peak of 13,292 schools (Jacobs, 1998), the percentage of churches with schools had doubled to two-thirds. These schools had enrolled over 5.5 million students, almost 47% of the Catholic school-age population in 1965 (Walch, 1996). It is worth noting that, even at its height, still one-third of Catholic parishes were without schools, and over half the Catholic school-age population (53%) did not attend Catholic schools.

The Mission of the Catholic School in the Post-Vatican II Era (1965–1995)

With the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church underwent a great transition in ecclesial thinking. It was the transition from viewing all ministry as inward (i.e., clergy supporting the Catholic community proper) to viewing ministry as outward (i.e., clergy and laity collaborating in providing ministry to the wider world). That change in thinking affected Catholic schools.

As noted above, the two dimensions that characterized Catholic schools in the pre-Vatican II era were to catechize Catholic youth and to preserve them from Protestant proselytizing. These focused the attention of ministry in the Church in an inward direction. As the Church turned outward, Catholic schools realized that they now had a mission to serve not only Catholic youth but the wider world. Catholic schools, especially in the inner cities, opened their doors to increasing numbers of non-Catholics. The goal of this door-opening was not in order to proselytize, but to empower the poor. In addition, the danger that many, both Catholics and non-Catholics, saw in the common schools was no longer the Protestant hegemony, but secularism.

During the post-Vatican II era, the goals of the Catholic school were modified. Catechesis became instruction in faith and morals with an emphasis on evangelization, community, holistic education, and worship. The commitment to protect the faith and morals of Catholic youth from Protestant evangelization that led to the development of the Catholic school system in the years following the Council of Baltimore changed in the years following the Second Vatican Council into a commitment to transform society through social justice and service. These modified goals will now be considered.

Instruction in Faith and Morals

There was still the need to provide Catholic students with instruction in the faith and morals. This focus of Catholic mission of the school continued unabated in the post-Vatican II era. The bishops of the Church promulgated that young people are "to grow at the same time in that new life which has been given them in baptism" (Vatican Council II, 1965/1975, n. 8). McClelland (1996) described the primary purpose of Catholic education as "the transmission of Divine Teaching and transcendental values, the commitment to the missionary imperative of the propagation of the Good News of the Gospel in and through transformation of human lives in daily service" (p. 155).

Instruction in faith and morals was the proclamation of the Good News (evangelization). It was carried out in the context of community. Community enabled the school to transform the whole of human life (holistic). This community became truly a community when it gathered to pray (public worship). These themes provide the outline for this section: evangelization, community, holistic education, and public worship.

Evangelization. Research about Catholic schools has described how Catholic school administrators and teachers carry out the Church's primary function of evangelization. First, and most importantly, teachers and administrators in Catholic schools evangelized by their teaching and by their example (Bryk, 1996; McLaughlin, 1996). Teachers and administrators were to be the exemplars of Gospel values. Administrative structures and decisions were required to proclaim Gospel values (Bryk, 1996). The entire atmosphere of the Catholic school was inundated with Gospel values (Schuttloffel, 2000) with the goal of forming practicing Catholics (Buetow, 1988; Groome, 1996; McCready, 1981).

The Catholic school was part of an intellectual tradition that expresses itself in the search for the truth. In Catholic Thomistic tradition, truth is seen as transcendental rather than transient. Because it is grounded in the one God, truth is good and beautiful (Reinhardt, 1962). The goal of Catholic schools, according to the Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE, 1988), was to be of assistance to their students in developing the wisdom to distinguish the true and the good from passing fancies of the current moment. The Catholic school was charged with helping students acquire a critical sense when examining propositions, so that they would not blindly accept things at face value (CCE, 1988). Jacques Maritain (1973), a French philosopher and the leading proponent of Thomism in the 20th century (Sweet, 2008), posited that schools must shape a "passion for truth." Maritain was concerned that if the pursuit

of the truth were abandoned "everything would devolve into competing interests and ultimately to the dominance of the most powerful" (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993, p. 39).

Buetow (1988) described the curriculum of the Catholic school as classical humanist. This curriculum was based on established values and marked by intellectual discipline, the development of the whole person in universal and established terms, the development of leadership qualities, and the establishment of authoritative truth and knowledge. The goal of this curricular approach was the development of wisdom. According to Buetow (1988), everyone needs at least enough wisdom to unify life's experiences. For the Christian, that is not enough. Christian wisdom, indeed, goes beyond visible realities to those that cannot be seen. "The Catholic school should teach its pupils to discern in the sound of the universe the creator whom it reveals and, in the achievements of science, to know God and man better" (Buetow, 1988, p. 86). By coming to a knowledge and understanding of the world, the student should be able to come to a better understanding of the God whose Word is revealed in part through the creation (John, 1:1).

Christian wisdom was made manifest by an academic rigor that was marked by a critical questioning and creative posture that allowed students always to see possibilities of the good (Groome, 1996). Groome believed the curriculum of Catholic education must reflect and promote three commitments: 1) to affirm students' basic goodness, in order to promote their dignity, to honor their fundamental rights, and to develop their gifts to the fullest—as God's reflections; 2) to educate people to live responsibly, with God's help, for the fullness of life that God wills for self and others—as responsible partners; and 3) to convince and mold people to live lives that are worthwhile and have historical significance, so that their every good effort advances the well-being of all.

Community. The religious formation of Catholic schools calls its membership not only to develop individually, but also to develop as a community—the People of God—with a unique sense of common mission (Bryk, 1996). In *To Teach as Jesus Did*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB, 1972) affirmed the following:

> Education is one of the most important ways by which the Church fulfills its commitment to the dignity of the person and the building of community. Community is central to educational ministry both as a necessary means and an ardently desired goal. The educational efforts of the Church must therefore be directed to forming persons-in-community. (p. 13)

The bishops continued to build on the concept of community by stating that:

> Building and living community must be prime, explicit goals of the contemporary Catholic school. Community is an especially critical need today largely because natural communities of the past have been weakened by many influences. Pressures on the family, the basic unit of society, have already been noted. Urbanization and suburbanization have radically changed the concept of the neighborhood community. (p. 108)

Community was both a necessary condition for, and the desired goal of, Catholic schools. Teachers and administrators helped form students' values within the context of the school community. Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) described this community in the broad strokes of school spirit, and the positive regard that students and faculty have for one another. Bryk and his colleagues explained that school reform research calls schools to become "learning communities" (Senge et al., 2000), and believed that this was accomplished in the Catholic high schools they studied in ways that were natural and human.

Bryk and his associates (1993) opined that Catholic schools have a different organizational structure than public schools. They defined this structure as "communal." The essential features of this communal structure are: The boundaries of the community are defined, there are shared organizational beliefs and a shared purpose, social activities that give life to the organizational beliefs, and the formal organizational roles facilitate the social dynamic that is at play in the school. The organizational beliefs that Bryk and his associates observed were described as "expansive, liberating, and humanizing" (p. 144), as opposed to the narrow, restrictive, and closed approach of other ideologically -loaded institutions.

Catholic high school communities were also depicted as places that are marked with a sense of balance. Bryk et al. (1993) described the Catholic high schools that they studied as places that were marked by a quiet that allows for contemplation and thinking, and yet as places that enjoy a vibrant social life. Students, faculty, and staff viewed the school as "their school" and "their home" (p. 128). The visitors to these schools found themselves entering a community of shared values. "What makes the Catholic school distinctive is its attempt to generate a community climate in the school that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love" (CCE, 1988, p. 3).

Holistic education. This context of community enabled the Catholic school to promote the holistic education of the child. The school sought not

only "to influence what students know and can do, but also the kind of people they will become" (Bryk et al., 1993, p. 10). Holistic development is marked by a sense of "total wellness"—that active process by which an individual becomes aware of and makes choices toward a more balanced existence (Buetow, 1988, p. 81). Total wellness challenged Catholic schools to assist students not only in becoming technologically competent, but also in providing them with a sense of hope as they confront the uncertainty of contemporary life, and to find community in the midst of a large, highly complex society (Bryk et al., 1993).

The American bishops understood doctrine as "not merely a matter for the intellect, but...the basis for a way of life" (USCCB, 1972, p. 19). This integration was not merely the result of a particular curriculum; rather, it was the example of teachers who "express an integrated approach to learning and living in their private and professional lives. Integration was further reinforced by the free interaction among the students themselves within their own community of youth" (p. 104).

Bryk and his associates (1993) found that amid the primary aims of education in the Catholic school were the formation of persons and the transmission of the cultural tradition. To accomplish this, teachers in Catholic schools were as concerned with the person the student would become as they were with the student's intellect. One teacher, a religious sister in Bryk's study, reinforced the importance of holistic education when she said, "What makes the Catholic school distinctive is its attempt to generate a community climate in the school that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love" (p. 98).

This vision of holistic development some (e.g., Bryk, 1996; Bryk et al., 1993) characterized as character education. This character education was integral to the Catholic school and integrated into the very fiber of the school's programs, creating a sense of wholeness and inner harmony within the school (Bryk, 1996; McClelland, 1996). It was not left as the preserve of one teacher or department, but rather as a shared responsibility of all the adults in the school, both in the curricular and extracurricular aspects of school life (Bryk, 1996; Groome, 1996).

As Bryk and his colleagues (1996) opined, the mission to educate the whole person was an element of the mission to teach faith and morals. The Catholic school educated the whole person because each person, in his or her entirety, is a unique gift from God:

> The Second Vatican Council emphasized that part of the continuing mission of the Catholic school was to teach faith and morals. Prevalent in the mission statements of Catholic schools is the phrase "education of the whole person." A

> Catholic education today stresses that each person, no matter how rich or poor, no matter how academically gifted or challenged, no matter what one's national heritage nor what color of the spectrum is one's skin, all are equal in the eyes of God. Each student has dignity and worth; because each one is a "person-in-community." (Bryk et al., 1996, p. 33)

Catholic schools taught more than school subjects and helping meet the multiple needs of students. They also taught knowledge about the Catholic faith and assisted their students in integrating that faith into their lives (Schuttloffel, 2000). According to Buetow (1988), "Catholic schools' personal goal is to communicate to pupils what it means to be fully human in the light of Christ" (p. 85). Essentially, the holistic development that lies at the heart of Catholic education is to provide students with a worldview. This worldview contextualized the diverse areas of knowledge that students were required to learn in the curriculum (Bryk, 1996; Porath, 2000).

Public worship. As noted above, the Catholic school, in its proclamation of the Good News (evangelization), instructed the students in faith and morals. This proclamation, this mission, was carried out in the context of community. The Catholic school community becomes most truly a community when it gathers to pray. The bonds of friendship, trust, and love are enhanced through its prayer life and especially the celebration of the Eucharist.

The Eucharist was the focus of the Catholic school community's worship (Bryk et al., 1993; Buetow, 1988). Above and beyond the celebration of the Eucharist, Catholic schools had expanded prayer opportunities for students and faculty. Prayer services, retreats, and Scripture reflections were among the examples of the types of opportunities schools provided (Bryk et al., 1993). The life of the school needed to mirror the liturgical year of the Church. School celebrations were consonant with the rhythms of the Church's year. Principals were encouraged to make these prayer opportunities personal, reflective, and meaningful to the participants at their developmental level (Buetow, 1988; Ciriello, 1996). Thus, Catholic schools in the post-Vatican II era provided instruction in faith and morals though evangelization, community, holistic education, and public worship.

Social Justice and Service

By the time of the Second Vatican Council, the population served by the Catholic school had changed from the time of its founding. The Catholic schools initially had sought in the 19th and early 20th century to protect the

faith of the immigrants from Europe. At the time of the council, many of the students in the Catholic schools of New York and elsewhere were from Central America, Africa, the American South, Asia, the Caribbean, and the former republics of the Soviet Union. "Mainstream education, and equipping disadvantaged children to participate fully in American economic and political life, have become predominant concerns of Catholic schools" (Hill & Celio, 2000, p. 239). This change in population occasioned a change in the mission of the schools. "The charter for Catholic schools shifted from protecting the faithful from a hostile Protestant majority to pursuing peace and social justice within an ecumenical and multicultural world" (Bryk, 1996, p. 30).

Catholic schools have seen themselves as centers of social justice and liberation. Prior to the council, the schools primarily served Catholic children who themselves were immigrants or the children of immigrants. The concern was social justice and liberation for these children. At the time of the council this concern reached out to the world beyond the school. Catholic educators sought to instill in their students a concern for those who are poor and those who are marginalized. Some of these poor and marginalized people were Catholics, but many were not. Catholic schools sought to create a world that was more humane, just, and caring for all people (Oldenski, 1997).

In *Gravissimum educationis*, issued on October 28, 1965, the bishops assembled for the Second Vatican Council decreed:

> It is, however, the special function of the Catholic school to develop in the school community an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity based on the Gospel. It...so orients the whole human culture to the message of salvation that the knowledge which the pupils acquire of the world, of life, and of men, is illumined by faith. Thus the Catholic school, taking into consideration as it should the conditions of an age of progress, prepares its pupils to contribute effectively to the welfare of the world of men and to work for the extension of the kingdom of God, so that by living an exemplary and apostolic life they may be, as it were, a saving leaven in the community. (Vatican Council II, 1965/1975, n. 8)

The American Catholic bishops responded in 1972 with their document *To Teach as Jesus Did*. In it they wrote:

> Through education the Church seeks to prepare its members to proclaim the Good News and to translate this proclamation into action. Since the Christian vocation is a call to transform oneself and society with God's help, the edu-

> cational efforts of the Church must encompass the twin purposes of personal sanctification and social reform in light of Christian vision. (n. 7)

In this document the bishops further argued that the Catholic school's educational mission should be judged on how well it is involved "in the search for solutions to the pressing problems of society" (p. 10). Social justice was not an option for Catholic schools. It was a necessity. To recognize that certain rights are inalienable is to recognize that not only does that right exist within oneself, but that it also exists within others. It was a duty to defend those same rights for every other person (Groome, 1996). The mission was to help others to develop as fully human individuals with a developed intellect and conscience (Porath, 2000). Therefore, "social morality, the advancement of social justice and the formation of caring relationships...are organizing themes" (Bryk, 1996, p. 138).

The Catholic Church has always had a mission of "practical charity." In his encyclical, *Rerum novarum*, Pope Leo XIII (1891) argued for practical charity when he wrote:

> The Church, moreover, intervenes directly in behalf of the poor, by setting on foot and maintaining many associations which she knows to be efficient for the relief of poverty. Herein, again, she has always succeeded so well as to have even extorted the praise of her enemies. Such was the ardor of brotherly love among the earliest Christians that numbers of those who were in better circumstances despoiled themselves of their possessions in order to relieve their brethren. (p. 29)

In the years following the Second Vatican Council, the Church sought not only to promote the exercise of practical charity, but also to work to transform the social conditions that create the need for practical charity. The neoscholastic tradition of the capacity of coming to the truth through reason and the need for moral principles in social life grounded the curriculum with a vital and active voice to address social problems (Bryk, 1996). Alternatively, Oldenski (1997) saw the intersection of liberation theology and critical pedagogy as a viable, contemporary approach to addressing social justice issues in Catholic schools. Whether teachers came from the perspective of the neoscholastic tradition or that of liberation theology, teachers in Catholic schools emphasized the social and personal aspects of student moral development (Bryk, 1996). According to Bryk and his associates (1993), Catholic school teachers themselves used terms such as, "this provides me with an opportu-

nity to serve" (p. 132) as they explained why senior teachers were willing to take the less than desirable remedial class assignments.

The message of Christ, who came to bring good news to the poor, called his followers to care for one another. This corporate mission of the Church was summarized in Matthew's Gospel, when Jesus says, "Whatever you do to the least of these little ones, you do to me" (Matt. 25). If this care is essential to the mission of the Catholic Church, then, by extension, it is also essential to the mission of the Catholic school.

The success of the Church's educational mission can be judged by how well it helps the Catholic community to see the dignity of human life with the vision of Jesus and involve itself in the search for solutions to the pressing problems of society (USCCB, 1972). The goal of Catholic education was to develop their students to be a people of justice. Teachers sought to develop the qualities that would assist students in guiding national, political, military, cultural, and economic policies (USCCB, 1972).

Social justice and a tradition of community service were firm elements of the Catholic school program. Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) reported that 90% of Catholic schools provided opportunities for volunteer service, both in-school and in-community. They interviewed Catholic school board members and quoted one board member as saying, "A school should not call itself Catholic if it doesn't have a volunteer service program" (p. 139). Service programs had two common elements: The service work had to make a real difference in people's lives, and provide physical contact with those being served (Bryk et al., 1993). Ciriello (1996) provided principals with guidelines for the development of good service programs. These programs were characterized by the following: "1) a degree of selectivity and decision making on the part of the participants, 2) adult oversight to provide supervisory monitoring and evaluation, 3) reflective components, and 4) a concern to coordinate with the needs of the parish" (p. 11). The end result is that alumni of Catholic schools will carry a concern for justice and the poor with them into their adult lives, occupations, and professions (Buetow, 1988).

In a study published in *Phi Delta Kappan*, Godwin, Ausbrooks, and Martinez (2001) studied 2,184 eighth graders in 7 public and 24 private schools in New York City and Fort Worth, Texas. They found that students who attended private schools in general were more tolerant than students in public schools. They also found that private school students showed more support for democratic norms. Greene, Giammo, and Mellow (1999) reached a similar conclusion in their research of 3,400 adult Latinos; those who attended more years of private schooling were more tolerant than those who attended fewer or no years of private schooling. In addition, Greene and

Winters (2006) found that the voucher plan in Washington, D.C. had an effect on the students who attended private schools. The voucher program had given students the opportunity to attend schools that were less segregated than the public schools they had attended. As Haynes (2005) reported in the *Washington Post*, the majority of voucher students (61% in the 2004-2005 school year) attended Catholic schools. From this it can be inferred that the Catholic schools were more racially integrated than the public schools, a factor that contributes to the public good.

Conclusion

In summary, during the 30 years following the Second Vatican Council, Catholic schools were evangelical, not in a sense that they sought converts, but that they sought to change the world one child at a time. Catholic schools were faith centered, not in the sense that they promoted a specific creed that all must believe to be saved, but in the sense that they promoted the God-given worth of each individual.

Each Catholic school develops its own statement of its mission, based on Church documents and the particular needs of the school. This paper examined the critical elements of Catholic mission in the post-Vatican II era. These elements are evangelization, community, holistic development, public worship, social justice, and service.

Catholic education in the United States has continued to evolve. During the 1990s and into the new millennium, that is, during the latter part of the papacy of John Paul II and the papacy of Benedict XVI, a more conservative influence has grown stronger in the Church. World Youth Days and the papal document *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* have emerged as influences on the Catholic schools by urging Catholic educators to be faithful to Church doctrine. William Dingers (2007) argues that the problem that the Church, and the Catholic school, faces today is "the decline in Catholic communalism and the commitment to the church's institutional expressions" (p. 6). He continues:

> The atrophy of Catholicism's communal participation and the need for a socially embedded experience of the Tradition (in ministries, parish life, associations, societies, and in prayer, social justice, and formation groups) must also be addressed in catechetical efforts if the church is to engage and transform American culture from a position of vitality and strength. (p. 6)

In addition, the recent Vatican document, *Educating Together in Catholic Schools* (CCE, 2007, n. 34) also highlights the communal nature of Catholic

education, but does so by urging educators to be faithful to union with the Church: "By its very nature, the Catholic school requires the presence and involvement of educators that are not only culturally and spiritually formed, but also intentionally directed at developing their community educational commitment in an authentic spirit of ecclesial communion" (n. 34).

Questions for Reflection

The mission of a Catholic school in the era following the Second Vatican Council can be summarized as follows: In response to the Gospel, the Catholic school seeks to become a community dedicated to the holistic development of its members, to the rational search for truth, to works of justice and service, and to the worship of God.

The Catholic schools of today are built on the foundations laid in both the pre- and the post-Vatican II eras. As Catholic educators engage in their periodic reviews of their schools' mission, the authors propose that these educators look at the foundation that was laid in the post-Vatican II era and evaluate which elements of this foundation are best carried into the contemporary era.

The following questions are suggestions for all those who are involved in Catholic schools. Prayerfully consider them and their application to the local Catholic school.

Evangelization

1. The goal of our school is to help both students and staff grow in Gospel values.
2. The Word of God is important to the people in this school.
4. The mission statement of this school is grounded in Gospel values.
5. The teachers in this school model the values of Christ.
6. The Gospel has relevance in my life.
7. As a teacher, it is my obligation to help my students grow in their faith.
8 The spiritual and faith development of my students is as important as their academic development.
9. The school program challenges students and faculty to respond to the Word of God.
10. One of the primary functions of this school is to transmit the essential doctrines and devotions of the Church.
11. The lives of the students and faculty are transformed through the Word of God.

Community

1. The goals of this school cannot be achieved unless the faculty and students join together as a community.
2. The formation of community is essential to the educational mission of this school.
3. The phrase "We are community" captures the essence of this school.
4. Being hospitable to visitors is a core value at our school.
5. People in this school respect one another.
6. A sense of community permeates the daily life of this school.
7. The students' school spirit is a natural outgrowth of the sense of community in our school.
8. This is OUR school.
9. People in this school depend on one another.
10. I sense the feeling of community when I enter this school.

Holistic Development

1. Our school seeks to develop the whole person.
2. This school aims to influence both what the students know and what kind of people they become.
3. This school seeks to integrate habits of the mind with habits of the heart.
4. The educational mission of our school is the moral, spiritual, physical, and intellectual development of our students.
5. We teach values and are concerned about meeting all the needs of our students.
6. All members of the faculty share responsibility for the character development of each of our students.
7. An educational goal of our school is to communicate to students what it means to be fully human.
8. The faculty communicates a basic and unifying view of life to the students.
9. The students in our school acquire a unifying wisdom that includes knowledge of the world, life, and one another that is illuminated by faith.
10. Our faith binds together all that we do in this school.
11. The curriculum of this school seeks to nurture both the intellectual and spiritual development of the students.

12. Teachers in this school model higher-order thinking skills for their students.
13. Our school is a community of life long learners.

Public Worship

1. Prayer is a regular part of our school's daily schedule.
2. Our school prays.
3. The teachers in this school lead their students in prayer.
4. The faculty gathers as a group to pray.
5. There is a prayerful atmosphere in our school.
6. The school community marks special occasions by gathering to pray.
7. Our school community regularly gathers to celebrate the Eucharist.
8. Our students have opportunities to plan liturgical services.
9. There are posters and displays in our school that reflect the importance of the liturgical seasons.
10. Students are given opportunities to participate in liturgical ministries (e.g., prayer leaders, readers, music ministers).
11. The life of the school mirrors the rhythm of the liturgical year.
12. Our principal is a prayerful person.

Social Justice and Service

1. As a school, we believe that there cannot be peace without justice.
2. The teachers in this school take their obligation to serve their students seriously.
3. Our school believes we are responsible for one another.
4. Teachers emphasize the need to work for justice in the world to their classes.
5. In order to attain peace in the world, we must work together with people from other churches.
6. The teachers in our school work to develop a commitment to social justice in our students.
7. This school is a just place.
8. Our students care for one another.
9. Our school provides opportunities for faculty and students to serve the needs of the less fortunate.

10. Our teachers challenge students to respect one another.
11. An important part of our curriculum is instilling the value that we must care for one another, especially those who are less fortunate than ourselves.

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