

## THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL AND THE QUEST FOR UNITY

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*Christian unity has been a repeated theme of the papacy of John Paul II. Inspired by Vatican II's call for a new openness to ecumenical efforts, the Pope has been an outspoken advocate for renewed dialogue among Christian churches. This article analyzes recent efforts and suggests ways in which the Catholic school, through its curriculum, faculty, governing boards, and outreach programs, can contribute to the ecumenical vision of Vatican II.*

As Pope John XXIII began the Second Vatican Council, he placed two items on the agenda for the *aggiornamento* of the Church: a new turn to the world in the Church's social teaching and a new openness to the union of the churches in ecumenism. As central to the formation of Catholic leaders for the new millennium, Catholic schools are pivotal in fostering the zeal for Church unity which is central to the Catholic faith today.

As Pope John Paul II reminds us,

...it is absolutely clear that ecumenism, the movement promoting Christian unity, is not just some sort of "appendix" which is added to the Church's traditional activity. Rather, ecumenism is an organic part of her life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does; it must be like the fruit borne by a healthy and flourishing tree which grows to its full stature. (John Paul II, 1995, #20)

The quest for unity among Christians and for the full communion of the churches is part of what it means to be a faithful Catholic today.

Again John Paul II reminds us:

To believe in Christ means to desire unity; to desire unity means to desire the church; to desire the church means to desire the communion of grace

which corresponds to the Father's plan from all eternity. Such is the meaning of Christ's prayer: *Ut Unum Sint...* Concern for restoring unity pertains to the whole church, faithful and clergy alike. It extends to everyone, according to the ability of each, whether it be exercised in daily Christian living or in theological and historical studies. (John Paul II, 1995, #19)

After 30 years of pilgrimage toward Christian unity, there is much to be learned and much to be taught. The school is an important locus for nurturing not only the conversion that is necessary for the Catholic ecumenical vision, but also for the instruction that gives this vision the religious, spiritual, and experiential content of the ecumenical movement.

This essay will touch on three aspects of the school's mission: 1) the understanding of the ecumenical dimension of Catholic identity and the resources available for supporting this vision; 2) the role of school administration in ecumenical leadership; and 3) the implications for the school curriculum. We will treat only ecumenism, not the interfaith or intercultural mission of the school, as urgent as these may be. It is important to communicate this distinction to non-Catholic staff as well as Catholics who may not have had a Catholic education. Exploring this dimension of Catholic identity is both an opportunity for intentional school programming and a challenge for research in the reception of Vatican II in Catholic schools.

## INTRODUCTION

The United States Catholic culture of the 1960s and the Council shifted the center of Catholic identity and its core articulation in the Catholic schools.

Vatican II, in proclaiming a new role for the Church in the modern world, however created such a [postethnic, postdefensive] purpose. 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, Lee, & Holland, 1993, p. 49)

Cardinal Castrillon, president of the Congregation for the Clergy, in addressing the U.S. Catholic bishops on the new *General Directory for Catechesis* was encouraging and very specific on the role of the schools in proclaiming the Church's mission to foster zeal for the unity of the Church and to impart knowledge about the ecumenical priority of the churches together:

Every kind of school, at whatever stage, should include an ecumenical aspect in their religious instruction. In accordance with its own specific ethos, the school should tend to educating the heart and the intelligence. It should form human and religious values, and support dialogue, peace, and interpersonal relations. (Castrillon, 1998, p. 476)

In the 1970s, when the United States bishops issued the pastoral *To Teach as Jesus Did* and the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) published *Giving Form to the Vision* to nurture faith community among faculty and students, many schools began to confront the vision of the Second Vatican Council for the first time. In some schools, the religion departments had to lead conciliar reform. In other cases, administrations and dioceses provided inservice through the 1960s to bring whole faculties on board with the renewed Catholic identity.

Some religion teachers retired from catechetics when the liturgical, biblical, social, and ecumenical agenda of the Church became part of their responsibility. Others continued with the preconciliar vision of the Church well into the 1970s. Some new teachers gave preference to methodology over content, either because of superficiality of formation or because of negative feelings generated by earlier styles of teaching. Religion departments, teachers, and whole schools occasionally found themselves caught in an ideological tug of war between various elements in the Church.

The process by which the Church in the United States implemented the 1971 *General Catechetical Directory* engaged a large range of school and other religious educators in contributing to the bishops' *Sharing the Light of Faith*. By the time this 1977 text was published, the reception of Vatican II had deepened and some healing of the polarization over religious education was beginning to take place.

The discussions engendered by *Giving Form to the Vision* drew other faculty into discussion of the meaning and content of Vatican II—its liturgical, biblical, social, and ecumenical reforms—in ways that made a common mission possible. In some cases, this was the first time that fellow Christians on our faculties, not members of the Catholic Church, had a chance to share their stories. In other cases, it gave religion teachers and other informed members of the school community a chance to share their ecumenical conversion experience with colleagues.

## **CATHOLIC IDENTITY AND THE IMPERATIVE TOWARD UNITY**

In a stimulating talk on Catholic school identity, Daniel Pilarczyk, Archbishop of Cincinnati, emphasizes the holiness that characterizes the community:

A Catholic school is a community of persons gathered for the purpose of learning secular and religious matters, which learning is directed toward a deeper acceptance of holiness from God, all in affiliation with the sacraments and the structures of the Catholic Church. (Pilarczyk, 1998, p. 405)

Whatever other criteria may apply in evaluating the identity of the Catholic school, one essential is its quality as a faith community with a purpose of motivating and learning, including developing a zeal for God's will for the unity of the Church. Sometimes it seems that competition with public schools consumes more research energies than faith development or ecumenical leadership.

Groome characterizes the dimensions of Catholic identity, which are of their very nature oriented toward the ecumenical vision the Church has been building since the Council:

Our claim to be "Catholic" should confront us with our sins of exclusion and sectarianism, and ever challenge us to become an inclusive community with hospitality and openness to all. Clearly this commitment must permeate Catholic education. Catholic is reflected in its *anthropology* as the curriculum affirms each person's worth and engages all their gifts in a holistic way. Its *sacramentality* is catholic as it encourages people to appreciate both the unity and diversity of life, to experience God's Spirit as the love energy of all creation. Its *community* emphasis is catholic when the school is truly a place of welcome and inclusion and educates its students that "neighbor" has no limits. Teaching the *tradition* is catholic as it convinces students of the universality of God's saving presence and love for all peoples, and grounds them in this particular tradition without prejudice or sectarian bias. And its *rationality* is catholic as it opens people to the truth, wherever it can be found. (McLaughlin, O'Keefe, & O'Keefe, 1996, p. 123)

Hypher notes the importance of the two dimensions of Catholic identity as he reflects on the British bishops' discussions of religious diversity:

The Catholic agenda, which is both about tradition and incarnation, [and] about fidelity and mission, believes that a genuine openness can only arise from a conscious awareness and acceptance of one's identity, while at the same time a true fidelity to one's identity must include openness to the reality of the other and responsibility for the whole of society. (McLaughlin et al., 1996, p. 224)

## THE CHURCH'S TEACHING

In the 30 years since the Council and its Decrees on Education and on Ecumenism, specific directives have continued to emerge to strengthen and clarify the Church's mission in serving the unity of the Church. During the 1990s there have been three very important documents: the 1993 *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, the 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, and the 1998 *Ecumenical Formation for Pastoral Workers*. These reinforce the impetus for ecumenical education articulated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *General Directory for Catechesis*.

The *Directory* brings together the policies articulated in a dozen Vatican documents and introduces an important new chapter on ecumenical formation. The *Directory* characterizes the ecumenical mission of the Church:

The ecumenical movement is a grace of God, given by the Father in answer to the prayer of Jesus and supplication of the Church inspired by the Holy Spirit. While it is carried out within the general mission of the Church to unite humanity in Christ, its own specific field is the restoration of unity among Christians. Those who are baptized in the name of Christ are, by that very fact, called to commit themselves to the search for unity. Baptismal communion tends toward full ecclesial communion. To live our Baptism is to be caught up in Christ's mission of making all things one. (Pontifical Council, 1993, #9)

The *Directory* is designed to "motivate, enlighten and guide this [ecumenical] activity," as well as to provide directives. It has been developed "in the light of the experience of the Church in the years since the Council and taking account of the present ecumenical situation." Diocesan ecumenical commissions, ecumenical commissions within religious communities, and special delegates with responsibility for promoting Christian unity in their sphere of action are all suggested by the *Directory*.

The school will find resources for collaboration with diocesan ecumenical programs, which as the *Directory* notes vary widely:

The situations being dealt with in ecumenism are often unprecedented, and vary from place to place and time to time. The initiatives of the faithful in the ecumenical domain are to be encouraged. But there is need for constant and careful discernment by those who have ultimate responsibility for the doctrine and the discipline of the Church. (Pontifical Council, 1993, #30-34)

[The school's mission] emphasizes both faith community and curriculum content for Catholic schools: The school, of every kind and grade, should give an ecumenical dimension to its religious teaching, and should aim in its own way to train hearts and minds in human and religious values, educating for dialogue, for peace and for personal relationships.

a) The spirit of charity, of respect, and of dialogue demands the elimination of language and prejudices which distort the image of other Christians. This holds especially for Catholic schools where the young must grow in faith, in prayer, in resolve to put into practice the Christian Gospel of unity. They should be taught genuine ecumenism, according to the doctrine of the Catholic Church.

b) Where possible, in collaboration with other teachers, different subjects, e.g. history and art, should be treated in a way that underlines the ecumenical problems in a spirit of dialogue and unity. To this end it is also desirable that teachers be correctly and adequately informed about the origins, history and doctrines of other Churches and ecclesial Communities, especially those that exist in their region. (Pontifical Council, 1993, #68)

Pope John Paul II devoted his 12th encyclical letter, *Ut Unum Sint*, to the unity of the Church in order to help us as Catholics and educators to live up to our ecumenical vocation. This letter is a summary of the 30 years of Catholic participation in the ecumenical movement. It recounts the irreversible commitments made and the relationships developed. It outlines an agenda for dialogue while affirming that Christians share more than divides us. Among its most dramatic encouragements for Catholics is to see all Christians, according to their position and formation, as called to serve the unity of the Church. The ecumenical mission of the Church is not to be an "appendix," but central to the life of the Church.

Catholics no longer speak of "separated brethren" but of fellow Christians. As will be noted below, John Paul II challenges us as educators to help the Church to "receive" the results of 30 years of dialogue so that all of our people can participate in the fruits of the Spirit that have enriched all of our churches by our common witness, dialogue and deepening spiritual ties with one another.

Most recently, in this context of educational renewal for Catholics, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (the office in the Holy See responsible for ecumenism) has developed the document *The Ecumenical Dimension in the Formation of Pastoral Workers* (Pontifical Council, 1998). It suggests that teachers and all pastoral workers begin their studies with a course on ecumenism, so that all Catholic theology and pastoral practice are seen through the prism of zeal for the unity of the Church and understanding of the Catholic faith in the context of ecumenical commitment. Implementing this program provides a major challenge for our Catholic schools, for our inservice programs, and for our collaboration with ecumenical partners.

## THE AMERICAN CULTURAL CONTEXT

In a school that is entirely or predominantly Catholic, special effort will be necessary to ensure that there are occasions for ministers and priests of other churches to participate in ecumenical services. Opportunities for dialogue and visits to other churches will need particular attention. The curriculum should be particularly attentive to learning about other churches and the history of Catholic relations with them (Pontifical Council, 1998).

In schools where other Christian communities are represented, the faculty should know the churches of our non-Catholic students and the history of Catholic ecumenical relations with them. These fellow Christians should feel welcome. All Christian students should understand their presence as an opportunity for ecumenical learning and fostering unity among the churches to which they belong. Attempts to undermine the Christian faith of students or faculty or use of the school for proselytism are to be avoided (Pontifical Council, 1993).

All staff should take account of the elements unique to American culture that challenge Catholic identity and its ecumenical component. There are tendencies toward an undifferentiated Christian tolerance, traditionally spoken of as *indifferentism*, which would leave the specific commitments of the Catholic Church as one set of Christian convictions among the many. This sort of diffused Christianity does not serve the ecumenical vision of the Church, as Phan notes,

While intra-Christian [ecumenical] and interreligious dialogue is imperative for contemporary Christian theology and practice, it is neither feasible nor productive in religious education to aim at the formation of a generically Christian attitude and identity, since it is only through a particular community of faith, with its own beliefs, rituals, and ethical and spiritual practices that a person gains access to and is socialized into the common Christian heritage. (Phan, 1998, p. 171)

Another prevalent tendency in the polarized and politicized religious atmosphere in many of the churches, including Catholic, is to sacrifice their identity. As Phan notes:

Given the recent remarkable progress in ecumenical dialogue, doctrines and structures that at one time were regarded as exclusive properties of the Catholic Church are today becoming common possessions of many in the mainline Christian churches. Rather than *differentiation* and *exclusiveness*, I conceive Catholic identity as *intensification* and *deepening*.... Dialogues do not constitute a threat to Catholic identity; rather they provide a necessary means and the opportunities for deepening and intensifying the Catholic identity, not over against others but with them. (Phan, 1998, p. 179)

Likewise, at the school where students and staff learn to differentiate between press reports about Catholicism and fellow Christians and the reality of what the churches stand for in faith, public witness, and their relationships with one another. Each cultural context differs: "ecumenical formation requires a pedagogy that is adapted to the concrete situation of the life of persons" (Pontifical Council, 1993, pp. 55-56).

## ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP

The Catholic school must first and foremost be a school. This is not because the academic program is supposed to serve as a come-on, in order to get the students to engage in the more "churchy" aspects of the school's life, but because the education of young people, getting them ready for their life in the world, is a laudable occupation in itself... Unless there is a true, effective academic program, you don't have a school at all. (Pilarczyk, 1998, p. 406)

The dimensions of faith community, liturgical life, and outreach in service are all integrated into a learning community. It is not enough to experience conversion to ecumenical dialogue, common prayer with other Christians, and common service in the world. Catholic ecumenical commitments, results, and goals must be part of the intellectual project of faculty and students.

Pilarczyk's admonition regarding religion faculty can apply to Catholic administrators as well:

If I had my way, nobody would be allowed to teach religion in any Church institution or program unless he or she had carefully read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* from cover to cover at least once and had a significant acquaintance with the 1997 *General Directory for Catechesis*. (1998, p. 406)

One might add the 1993 *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* and the 1998 *The Ecumenical Dimension in the Formation of Pastoral Workers*. Knowing the Church's position and where to find resource material is basic for administrators.

Pilarczyk emphasizes the interdependence of the Catholic community by noting the role of the local bishop. "He is the visible sign of Catholic identity, and no person or institution can lay claim to Catholic identity unless there is some kind of clear relationship with the local bishop" (Pilarczyk, 1998, p. 406). In our ecumenical educational work, this means taking advantage of the support of diocesan ecumenical officers, being willing to provide educators to serve on the diocesan ecumenical commission, and promoting in the school the relationships, covenants, and conciliar ecumenical programs of the diocese.

This interdependence in Catholic schooling does not mean that all ecumenical initiatives come from the diocese or clergy. The school has an important role in serving the bishop and the Church in developing new ecumenical relationships and models:

For the Catholic Church, a commitment to subsidiarity means that dioceses and religious orders see their role as enhancing the function of local institutions where they currently exist and promoting the development of new institutions in response to new needs. Rather than regulating human activity under the homogenizing norms of a central bureaucracy, the role of external governance is to facilitate and stimulate collective local action. (Bryk et al., 1993, p. 164)

## **FAITH COMMUNITY FORMATION**

Creating a context for ecumenical conversion is essential to Catholic faith community formation. As John Paul II notes:

The entire life of Christians is marked by a concern for ecumenism; and they are called to let themselves be shaped, as it were, by that concern. ...there is a clear connection between renewal, conversion and reform.... No Christian community can exempt itself from this call. (John Paul II, 1995, #16)

For the school this means providing an environment of commitment to the Catholic goal of visible unity, openness to a dialogue of love and hospitality, and enthusiasm about every step closer to the goal of unity among the churches. The Catholic ecumenical climate is the responsibility of the administrative team, its leader, and its entire faculty. Schoolwide ecumenical services during the Week of Prayer and at other times, ecumenical components of retreats, symbols of ecumenical events, and elements of the religious decor of the school all contribute to the community's sense of the ecumenical component of Catholic identity.

The spirit of charity, of respect, and of dialogue demands the elimination of language and prejudices which distort the image of other Christians. This holds especially for Catholic schools where the young must grow in faith, in prayer, in resolve to put into practice the Christian Gospel of unity. They should be taught genuine ecumenism, according to the doctrine of the Catholic Church. (Pontifical Council, 1993, p. 141)

Knowing the particular churches with which Catholics are in dialogue, the results of these dialogues and their implications for Catholic faith and life, and Catholic principles for relating to fellow Christians with whom we are not yet in full communion form a foundation for effective school policy. There is also an ecumenical spirit, a "grammar" of ecumenism that is the hallmark of a truly Catholic school. Only a specialist may know the details, but the climate and spirit are matters of policy and leadership. One does not need to know the details of ecumenical developments to have a zeal for the unity of the Church and an openness to Catholic initiatives to deepen communion with fellow Christians.

Research shows that Catholic schools are effective in building community, both in their results with students and parents and in the priorities of administrators (Convey, 1992). Catholic schools provide unique opportunities for the experience of the "real, but imperfect, communion" between Catholics themselves and members of other churches. Schoolwide celebrations of importance to significant communities in a particular area are opportunities for community building. Some examples might be: celebrating Orthodox festivals in schools where there are Orthodox churches in the neighborhood or students in the school; highlighting Protestant-Catholic ecumenical progress in Reformation week where there is a substantial Lutheran population; or welcoming Black pastors to celebrate Martin Luther King Day in a school with a significant African American population.

This spirit is primarily one of prayer with and for fellow Christians and for the unity of our churches. A Catholic faith community celebrates occasions for ecumenical prayer on a schoolwide basis as well as in religion classes. Ministers and priests from our partner churches are not only welcome, they are part of our public celebrations and prayer. Pastors of our non-Catholic Christian students should be present with us in our ministry in public ways, according to the situation of the local school.

While teachers and administrators outside of religion classes may not follow the relationships with particular churches and the results of the theological dialogues as closely as religion teachers might, they can still develop a receptive spirit, and know the “grammar” of the ecumenical movement. That is, they understand the methods and goals of the dialogues in which the Catholic Church participates and develop a receptive spirit, affirming progress and seeing the Catholic school as a place where these churches and these dialogue results are celebrated and understood at least in a general way.

For example, when the Lutheran-Catholic *Joint Declaration on Justification* is approved, most faculty and students will not be conversant with all of the details of the Reformation and the 30 years of ecumenical progress that makes such a declaration possible. Sometimes we teach the 30 years of divisions that developed between 1517 and 1546 in more detail than the events of dialogue and encounter between Protestants and Catholics that have characterized the pilgrimage of reconciliation between 1966 and the present. Certainly, from a Catholic point of view, the ecumenical progress of the last 30 years is as dramatic as the alienations of the same period in the 16th century.

We have had 30 years of serious dialogue, congregational and diocesan interchange, and personal relationships that have enabled us to overcome the animosity that characterized the polemics of the Reformation and some of the theological differences of the Reformed confessions of faith and the Council of Trent. Public events in the school, hospitality for Lutheran leadership, and opportunities for those studying this dimension of Catholic life to witness to other students and faculty, recommend themselves to an administration attentive to this dimension of Catholic identity.

The experience of ecumenical dialogue among Christians, above and beyond what is done in the religion class, is an important component of building the Catholic faith community.

## **BOARD FORMATION**

Board members are often selected to meet the school’s development and recruiting needs. They must also develop a sense of ministry and embrace the mission of the school. It is ironic that in some early Catholic board formation, public school models seemed more interesting than the Church’s teaching on lay ministry, collegiality, coresponsibility, and the evangelization mission of the People of God. The religious component of board formation,

including the ecumenical dimension of the Church's mission, is essential in Catholic schools.

The ecumenical *Directory* is an important resource for understanding the Catholic Church's policy and priorities for Catholic schools and other institutions. Board retreats can include an ecumenical component, especially when some board members, faculty, or students are not Catholics. Reflective or devotional moments during board meetings can bring members into contact with school and diocesan programs with other churches or signal important ecumenical developments in the Church. Christians from other churches can occasionally be asked to provide the devotions from their own tradition.

## **FACULTY SELECTION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Teachers in Catholic schools must be openly committed to the mission of the school and the Gospel, including its ecumenical imperative. Of course, fellow Christians who are not Catholic may be as student oriented, mission directed, and committed to the Christian faith as those who identify with our Church. Committed Christian colleagues who are devoted to the ecumenical agenda of their church and open to the developments their church has made with the Catholic Church over the decades are particularly valuable resources.

The religion faculty must be part of this core of mission-oriented colleagues. However, the religious dimension of the school and its ecumenical program cannot be relegated to the religion faculty alone. The religion teachers must have effective relational skills that enable them to touch their students' hearts. There are always students for whom the relational dimension of the Gospel is more important, at certain moments in their development, than the cognitive content of the tradition. The mission-oriented faculty minister especially to those alienated from the faith because of family, developmental stage, or personal conviction. This evangelical spirit should be characteristic of a wider circle than those who teach religion.

However, the religion faculty also must have the skills of professionals in the Catholic faith, including its commitment to the unity of Christians and its dialogue with other churches. Religion faculty must be selected with the same professionalism and evaluated with the same vigor as chemistry or German teachers. As the *General Directory for Catechesis* reminds, "religious instruction in school appears as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and same rigor as other disciplines" (Congregation, 1997, pp. 259-260).

Administrators also oversee the hiring of faculty, being sensitive to the backgrounds of prospective teachers in Catholic schools, but working carefully to see that there is strong ownership of the school's mission. While most mission statements are not so detailed as to give specifics on the ecumenical dimension of the school's mission, faculty must be sympathetic to the vision

of visible unity articulated by the Church and supportive of a faith environment where reconciliation and deepening relationships among the churches is a priority. *The Ecumenical Dimension in the Formation of Pastoral Workers* is a resource for faculty and staff development for both Catholic and non-Catholic faculty. Fellow Christians from churches with whom the Catholic Church has formal dialogues and is moving toward full communion are particularly important resources for contributing to a Catholic ecumenical environment.

The *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* notes that, "Not only teachers but all those who are involved in pastoral work will be progressively formed in accordance with the following principal orientations": a) scriptural and doctrinal basis for ecumenism, b) history of divisions and efforts and reconciliation, c) results of the dialogues, d) objective understandings of others and of the Catholic faith, e) linking internal Catholic unity and integrity with the concern for communion with other churches, f) deeper relations with specific Orthodox and Reformation churches, and g) development of programs adapted to age and ability of those being formed (Pontifical Council, 1993, #57; 1998, #26). These orientations are developed in more detail in *The Ecumenical Dimension* text.

Of course, the variety of roles and staff responsibilities of faculty must be taken into account. In some secondary schools, especially, a relatively small core of the nonreligious staff can be counted upon to pursue the religious formation, including its ecumenical dimension, that will contribute to the Christian and ecumenical atmosphere of the school and the nurturing of faith community necessary for the true Catholicity of the school.

There does not appear to be much data on non-Catholic teachers (McLaughlin et al., 1996). However, those who are from churches with which we are in dialogue should be encouraged to know the developments of the Catholic Church with their Christian tradition. Likewise, some of these Christian faculty members can contribute to the faith community development of the school and to opportunities for ecumenical dialogue. They can be encouraged to share the charisms of their traditions with staff members. Their ministers can be drawn upon for the ecumenical prayer services scheduled on campus.

In staff meetings and retreats it will be important to have fellow Christians from other churches share their stories. When agreements are reached between the Catholic Church and those churches to which significant numbers of the administration, faculty, or students belong, recognition of the agreement and opportunities for celebration, sharing, and common affirmation contribute to deepening the faith community experience in the school.

Students acquire their attitudes about other Christians and zeal for Christian unity from the interests, openness, and enthusiasm of teachers as much as they learn it in the content of religion classes. The encouragement

of administrators and the symbolic leadership of presidents and principals are factors in the ecumenical horizon developed in the faculty community. Modeling ecumenical openness, prayer for the unity of the Church, and dialogue on the part of leadership provide both students and faculty with role models for bringing these Catholic commitments into the daily life of the school.

A religiously diverse faculty can be a great advantage if its commitment to the mission of the Catholic school is strong and if it includes members who follow with interest and appreciation the ecumenical commitments of their church with the Catholic Church on the pilgrimage toward unity. Caution is warranted, however, when diligence in faculty selection is lacking and the questions of faith and mission are absent from the selection process.

The gradually increasing number of non-Catholic faculty represent another potent secularizing force. Although these individuals bring subject-matter expertise that is much needed, they also express somewhat different motives for teaching in Catholic schools and may introduce different conceptions of a "good school" into conversations about future directions. (Bryk et al., 1993, p. 334)

## **PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS**

### **MODELS OF DEALING WITH DIVERSITY**

In the 1960s there was limited discussion of ecumenical schools cosponsored by Catholics and other churches. While reception of the Council's ecumenical priorities took different forms in the United States Catholic schools, in Britain some ecumenical schools did develop (Chadwick, 1994; McLaughlin et al., 1996).

Discussion of non-Catholic students often takes place in the context of religious diversity, inner city schools, and shifts in the traditional balance (Baroni, 1969; Convey, 1992; Hawker, 1986; McLaughlin et al., 1996; Slaughter & Johnson, 1988). However, some studies indicate that African American parents, Catholic or Protestant, may have a higher religious motivation and a stronger affirmation of Christian identity for the school than white parents (Convey, 1992). With few exceptions, studies of diversity do not build on Catholic commitments to the unity of the Church as enunciated by the magisterium (O'Keefe, 1997). This also seems to be the case in British developments. Hypher notes: "Evidence suggested that the practices followed in Catholic schools relating to young people of other faiths were not always informed by the teachings arising from the Second Vatican Council" (McLaughlin et al., 1996, p. 216).

For decades there have been special courses in some schools which provide non-Catholics an alternative to Catholic religion classes (Gros, 1986). In

others, provisions are made for nurturing the faith of non-Catholic students through presence of their own ministers when Catholic confessors and counselors are provided. The ideal would be catechists skilled in the Catholic heritage but knowledgeable about other churches represented in the school and committed to following the ecumenical developments of our churches together. However, providing resources for such programs is a challenge.

The best way to provide for Christian diversity in our schools and for ecumenical formation of our people is by collaboration with educators from the churches committed to one another ecumenically:

In addition to the ordinary catechesis which all Catholics must receive, the Catholic Church recognizes that in circumstances of religious pluralism collaboration in catechesis can be enriching for the Catholic Church and for other ecclesial communities. Such collaboration, to the extent that it is possible, also affords an opportunity of giving common witness before the world to the truth of the Gospel. (Castrillon, 1998, p. 476)

## RELIGION CURRICULUM

The Catholic school exists to provide a fully integrated curriculum, with the Catholic heritage taking pride of place among the subjects taught.

Above all they [students] should know their own Church and be able to give an account of her teaching, her discipline and her principles of ecumenism. The more they know these, the better they can present them in discussions with other Christians and give sufficient reason for them. They should also have accurate knowledge of the other Churches and ecclesial Communities with whom they are in contact. Careful note must be taken of the various prerequisites for ecumenical engagement that are set out in the *Decree on Ecumenism* of the Second Vatican Council. (Pontifical Council, 1993, #74)

John Paul II is particularly concerned that catechists take their role in incorporating the results of ecumenical progress into Catholic instruction. "At the stage which we have now reached, this process of mutual enrichment must be taken seriously into account," "...a new task lies before us: that of receiving the results already achieved" which "must involve the whole people of God." Results are not to remain "statements of bilateral commissions but must become a common heritage" (John Paul II, 1995, #80). Before students can fully assimilate these results, teachers should be aware of what has been done and adapt it to the age levels of students and the particular framework of the parishes.

Catechesis carries a particularly important role in both imparting knowledge and forming a "genuine ecumenical attitude." The *Directory* outlines five important elements in the ecumenical dimension of catechesis: a) solid doctrinal content, taught within an understanding of the "hierarchy of truths,"

b) teaching about other churches honestly, recognizing them as means of salvation, c) helping students purify themselves and nourishing them in a true desire for unity, d) preparing young and maturing Catholics for living with other Christians, and e) keeping a clear perspective on the distinctions between the truths of faith and their expression (Pontifical Council, 1993). These elements are echoed in the *General Directory for Catechesis*.

Among the most important segments of the Catholic curriculum for ecumenical content and sensitivity is spiritual ecumenism, rooted in common baptism and expressing the real if imperfect communion among all Christians. The fourth chapter of the ecumenical *Directory*, "Communion in Life and Spiritual Activity Among the Baptized," must inform any sacramental catechesis. It not only outlines Catholic priorities in spiritual ecumenism, it also details the understanding and practice of sacramental sharing, especially Eucharist and marriage.

If the results of the dialogues in which the Catholic Church has been involved over the last 30 years are to become a common heritage as John Paul II suggests, they must find ways of touching our curricula at all levels. We are fortunate to have documented dialogues with the Orthodox (Borelli & Erickson, 1996), the Anglicans (Elder, Wondra, & Gros, 1997), and other major churches (Rusch & Gros, 1998; Vischer & Meyer, 1984) published in research volumes that are available for school and parish libraries. However, these technical theological resources, rich as they are, should be translated into "teacher friendly" resources in textbooks, study guides, and teachers' manuals to accompany every element of the Catholic religious curriculum.

Some emerging text materials (Riggs, McManus, & Gros, 1998) can be used in the formation of religion teachers and provide resources for administrators and board members. However, the urgency with which the Holy Father speaks of reception requires more materials adapted for every level of Catholic education.

Research on Catholic students shows that only 31% affirmed that "faith comes as a free gift" (Convey, 1992, p. 71). Our work with Lutherans on the issue of faith as a free gift (justification by faith through grace) has matured into a *Joint Declaration on Justification by Faith*, approved by the Holy See and the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Lutherans, who have insisted on the centrality of grace, also report young people who think they have to "earn God's love." We must work together so that the authentic faith which we now share becomes part of the lives and understanding of our people in response to God's free gift of the Gospel. Likewise, sacramental agreement with Episcopalians and other churches gives the opportunity to work together to deepen our students' understanding of Christ's presence in the Eucharist and the goal of full Eucharistic communion at the center of the ecumenical movement.

Where there is a campus ministry, the campus minister plays an impor-

tant role in the school's ecumenical mission. The ecumenical *Directory* explicitly recommends "encounters and discussions [that] can usefully be organized with other Christians," including meetings with students of other churches and ecclesial communities (Pontifical Council, 1993). In this sort of experiential learning, gradualness and adaptation are necessary (Pontifical Council, 1993). Ecumenical collaboration and placement are important in service projects. Reflection on the ecumenical implications, for the Catholic Church, is an important dimension of both spiritual formation and theological reflection.

## CONCLUSION

The Catholic school is only one venue for the nurturing of Catholics' commitment to the unity of the Church, albeit a privileged one. Schools do well to provide occasional adult Christian education programs that enrich the faith of the parents and wider Catholic community and enhance understanding of Catholic ecumenical principles and the results of our dialogue and collaboration as churches.

The parish is also an important locale for Christian nurturing and ecumenical activity. Even a school that is not parish based prepares Christians for a Catholic life that will find its mature focus in parish community. Knowing the churches in the vicinity of students' parishes and the relationships that must be nourished gives concrete content to the school faith community experience and curricular content.

What challenges do we face in helping schools become centers of Catholic ecumenical education? Do we need resources to help administrators implement the 1993 *Directory* and the 1998 *Ecumenical Formation* in a United States school context? How do we bring the theological results of Catholic dialogues into teachers' guides and text material? What are the most helpful professional development programs for teachers, boards, and staff? How do each year's developments find their way into the prayer, relational, and academic life of our schools?

What are some of the areas for research? Most studies of Catholic schools focus on the academic outcomes that can be measured with comparable secular institutions. The results of the *Assessment of Catholic Religious Education* provided by NCEA will, one hopes, demonstrate how well the postconciliar teachings of the Church, including its ecumenical program, are being received in Catholic schools. Do we need studies of the reception of Vatican II in school textbooks? In Catholic school faculties? In administrative programs? Such research on various principles and content of Catholic ecumenism as, for example, enunciated in *The Ecumenical Dimension in the Formation of Pastoral Workers*, would be very illuminating and provide a sense of the challenges for the future.

The variety of pressures on the school, the curriculum, and the students' families makes Catholic learning a challenge in our culture. We experience an atmosphere of religious illiteracy as an ecumenical problem challenging our churches together. We can work with other Christian educators to deepen our people's understanding of the Christian heritage, the richness of their own tradition, and the common future for which we pray.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* places the role of the school and its ecumenical mission in its proper context when it says:

Every Christian community, by the mere fact of being what it is, is moved by the Spirit to recognize its ecumenical vocation in the circumstances in which it finds itself, by participating in ecumenical dialogue and initiatives to foster the unity of Christians. Catechesis, therefore, is always called to assume an "ecumenical dimension" everywhere. This is done, firstly, by an exposition of all of Revelation.... In the second place, catechesis brings to the fore that unity of faith which exists among Christians and explains the divisions existing between them and the steps being taken to overcome them. Catechesis also arouses and nourishes a true desire for unity.... Finally, it prepares children, young people and adults to live in contact [with other Christians]. (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, #197)

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