

EDITORS' COMMENTS

Catholic schools in the United States have benefited for decades from the faithful service of vowed women religious. Many parish schools had their origin in the mission and ministry of religious communities whose apostolate was education. In many cases, these schools were built on the poverty of the religious community, for many of the sisters worked for little or nothing, lived on site, and provided a variety of additional services to the parish and its school.

The debt that Catholic education owes to women religious is enormous. In an effort to educate current educational leaders about the sacrifices, vision, commitment, and perseverance of the religious sisters, we offer a focus section that examines the contributions and struggles of a variety of dedicated women religious on whose shoulders the Catholic school system was first built. While one volume could not possibly contain even a brief overview of the work of such sisters, we learn of six outstanding leaders in this issue whose witness and zeal helped create a sustainable system of Catholic schools in the United States. We are grateful for the authors whose research resulted in these fine biographical essays – many of whom are members of the religious community under discussion – but most importantly, we are filled with gratitude for the stories they tell and the inspiration they provide. Current educational leaders have much to learn from people like Elizabeth Ann Seton, Katharine Drexel, M. Madeleva Wolff, Catherine Spalding, Stephanie Mohun, and Mary Emil Penet. Our thanks to M. Loretta Petit, O.P., professor emerita at the University of Dayton, for her help in bringing this focus section to fruition.

We also reprint with permission the most recent statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) detailing their support of Catholic elementary and secondary schools. As is our custom with such official documents, we follow the publication of the document with some invited, scholarly reflections that speak to the reception of the text in the broader educational community.

Four book reviews conclude the issue, engaging such topics as moral education, democracy, and selected international perspectives on Catholic education.

Ronald J. Nuzzi, Thomas C. Hunt, Co-Editors