

EDITORS' COMMENTS

This issue explores the theme of Catholic education as a dynamic presence—witness and ministry—of the Church in contemporary society. The authors featured here offer their research and analysis in the context of the opportunities posed by a global culture rich with diversity, the challenges present in a Church with increasing demand for lay leadership, and the creativity required to implement effective strategies to improve intellectual rigor and share the gifts of Catholic intellectual thought in an academic milieu that arguably is driven by tendencies toward secularization. Three articles explore issues of lay leadership in Catholic secondary schools, including a qualitative study from an international perspective that addresses the components of successful lay leadership and the appropriate resources needed to develop spiritual as well as professional competencies of principals (Belmonte & Cranston), a historical description of the commitment by the Lasallian Christian Brothers community to reanimate Catholic identity and maintain the charism of their particular religious tradition in their sponsored schools through a growing sense of cooperation between religious and lay faculty (Tidd), and a research-based exploration of the strengths and weakness of the president-principal model in Catholic secondary schools (James). Richard Shields explores the sacramental dimensions of religious education, describing the current context of tensions between individualism and communitarianism and in moral authority and rituals. Shields suggests that transformative and shared learning practices may help the Catholic community come to a better understanding of moral knowledge. This issue then explores the relatively recent establishment of Catholic Studies Programs as one response to the increasing need for innovative and academically rigorous strategies to support the presence of a distinct Catholic intellectual tradition in Catholic higher education. The focus section for this issue includes an introduction to and an overview of the development of these programs (Dosen), the intellectual and cultural debate surrounding these programs (Heft), and the successful and transformative implementation of a Catholic Studies program at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota (Briel).

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