

## **ARCHITECTS OF CATHOLIC CULTURE: DESIGNING & BUILDING CATHOLIC CULTURE IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

TIMOTHY J. COOK, NATIONAL CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION, 2001.

*Reviewed by Michael P. Caruso, S.J.*

Timothy Cook's contribution to the NCEA's *Catholic Educational Leadership Monograph Series*, *Architects of Catholic Culture: Designing & Building Catholic Culture in Catholic Schools*, provides a helpful tool kit for Catholic school leaders. In this volume the reader will encounter organizational theory that is useful for understanding and enhancing a school culture. The reference section provides substantial research sources.

The corporate world has pioneered many practices and mechanisms for better understanding organizational culture that are now used by government, health care, and education. Consider the ubiquity of the mission statement. Originally inspired by business as a way of focusing energy and services to serve their organizations better, mission statements have now been adopted by most Catholic schools.

Schools and other not-for-profit organizations have benefited from organizational research by using theories to inform practice. Cook provides a useful primer on such theories and how they relate to Catholic education. The reader will find a profitable introduction to enhancing Catholic school culture and a comprehensive summary of the most pertinent research and official Church statements that guide this work.

The concept of culture and its application to education can be rather fluid. Cook offers this definition of Catholic school culture:

Catholic school culture is...a "way of life" rooted in Christ, a Gospel-based creed and code, and a Catholic vision that provides inspiration and identity, is shaped over time, and is passed from one generation to the next through devices that capture and stimulate the Catholic imagination such as symbols and traditions. (p. 16)

Cook captured in words an experience the reviewer had before the publication of this book. I had visited St. Rocco School in Johnston, Rhode Island, where the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus administer and teach. The mission statement of this school, "Sharing the Love of the Heart of Christ," is cited, posted, symbolized, and known by the entire school. In my teaching and research, I have used it as a prime example of an effective mission state-

ment. Readers are likely to make similar discoveries in this book that confirm personal knowledge and experiences.

It is particularly encouraging that Cook's bountiful illustrations are drawn from all parts of the United States and include rural Catholic schools, which can be forgotten, marginalized, or ignored in the research.

Reading the text did produce some nostalgia: Respectful students popping out of their desks like bread out of toasters to enthusiastically greet visitors, classroom prayers, and especially those practices that are a cherished part of a religious community such as the Christian Brothers' mantra—"Live Jesus in our hearts/Forever! St. John Baptiste DeLaSalle/Pray for Us"—May crownings, and honoring saints in creative ways are but a few examples that will connect the reader with some of their own Catholic school heritage. The richness and importance of the Catholic tradition that Fr. Andrew Greeley has encouraged is found throughout the book. *Architects of Catholic Culture* is also forward thinking with an emphasis on social consciousness, service to the poor, and a global responsibility beyond one's school.

Cook provides 60 discussions, reflections, and activities in margin boxes throughout the text. These activities could have been assembled into their own volume, but the richness of their context would be absent. Any one of these boxes could provide a full day in-service or day of recollection for a faculty. An index listing these activities would have been a helpful alternative to searching for them in the text. Likewise, readers who frequently return to important books always appreciate a general index.

Cook has strengthened the national sense of Catholic education as a culture and community. He affirms many good practices, while offering practical plans for reflection, prayer, and intentionality.

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