

INTRODUCTION

PREPARING AND SUSTAINING A NEW LEADERSHIP: A BRIEF COLLABORATIVE ESSAY

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What role should Catholic higher education and other professional development efforts play in helping advance the mission of Catholic education at the elementary and secondary levels? The question is a significant one since Catholic education is at an important crossroads. Once staffed by women and men religious who were trained to impart a particular religious charism, today's Catholic schools are often led and staffed by lay men and women with varying degrees of religious preparation. Complicating the task is the present climate in which religious values are either ignored or dismissed. As the Congregation for Catholic Education has told us, the challenges we face are the result of a "crisis of values which, in highly developed societies in particular, assumes the form, often exalted by the media, of subjectivism, moral relativism and nihilism" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998, p. 4). What are the most pressing issues facing Catholic schools today with respect to mission and identity? What can be done to improve the ability of Catholic school leaders to meet these challenges?

Relying on both the resources of Catholic higher education and their own training programs, religious orders sent forth a reliable and continuous source of well-trained and often dynamic leaders, men and women who were not only competent administrators, but also capable of articulating the school's mission and purpose. When things worked well, the schools flourished. When they faltered, a pastor or provincial stepped in to make changes. One thing could always be counted on: the school's leadership was in the hands of someone who understood the religious nature of the enterprise, even in those instances when personal leadership or management skills were not what they should have been.

The articles in this focus section deal with leadership training and assume that such training must address certain fundamental issues relating to mission and identity. While there is little doubt that a good principal must be a good manager, sensitivity to the religious, moral, and value tradition of the Catholic community being served is seen by many superintendents and others as the feature or characteristic of school leadership most in need of attention and cultivation. Those superintendents who speak out in this essay are in agreement that this spiritual leadership role is the most difficult and the most neglected in the training and preparation process. These educational leaders propose that the challenge should be met through a variety of means. Each of the four superintendents offers at least one creative suggestion for further reflection and action.

Then three articles that follow describe diverse training programs that attempt to address this need. While different in nature, all are quite similar in aim. Each addresses one or more areas of training and sustaining a new cadre of leadership for Catholic schools. Sr. Mary Peter Traviss and Dr. Gini Shimabukuro of the University of San Francisco's Institute for Catholic Educational Leadership share research on the Institute's effectiveness in training new administrators for Catholic schools. Dr. Bill Rebores and his colleagues from Saint Louis University describe a program designed to identify and train potential Catholic school leaders for a complex urban system. His work has been generously supported by the Danforth Foundation, whose interest in urban educational leadership sparked the original project from which he adapted a program for Catholic school personnel. Dr. Timothy McNiff of the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia, describes a program which assists school principals in the development of their spiritual lives and understanding the role they play as apostolic leaders in the school community. All three involve collaborative efforts. These collaborative programs are designed to stretch the educational leader's understanding of self as well as the school's role in the faith life of the community.

To set the stage for these articles, we invited several superintendents of Catholic school systems ranging in size, geographic location, and complexity, to comment on the issue of leadership. They offer personal reflections based on years of experience in Catholic education and provide some generalizations that describe the context of Catholic education across the United States. Specifically we asked: What are the major challenges faced by the schools in your diocese? In light of these challenges, what kind of leadership are you looking for when you recruit principals and teachers for your schools? Their comments and reflections are instructive. Each describes a crisis of spiritual and religious leadership and proposes at least one possible venue for addressing that crisis.

REFERENCE

Congregation for Catholic Education. (1998). The Catholic school on the threshold of the third millennium. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, 2(1), 4-14.

IT'S NOT ABOUT STATUES AND A CRUCIFIX

SR. JANE HOSCH, OSF, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD-CAPE GIRARDEAU

The Catholic identity of a school is evidenced not only by crucifix and statue but by the faith-filled personnel who witness to Gospel values and call for their articulation in administrative and curricular areas, sports programs, and all school-related activities. The interview process for a Catholic school principal contains many professionally related questions. It should also include, however, questions such as: Would you feel at ease leading the faculty in prayer? What is your knowledge of and formal training in basic Catholic teachings? How would you integrate Catholic social principles into various curricular areas and into the general life of the school?

As a Catholic school superintendent, I review many applications of former public school administrators. If I employ them, it is imperative that they fulfill additional diocesan requirements established to ensure an adequate familiarity with Catholic educational philosophy by participating in development activities such as Catholic educational leadership programs, diocesan workshops, retreats, and days of reflection. These are critical components of an ongoing formation program for all school leaders, but especially for those whose background is the public school system. If we do not provide these opportunities on a timely and regular basis we will be simply private educational institutions without our Catholic identity. The Catholic culture will disintegrate because we cannot give to others what we ourselves do not have, that is, a life that witnesses to daily Gospel living.

OWNING THE MISSION IS PARAMOUNT

SR. GLENN ANNE MCPHEE, O.P., SUPERINTENDENT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN FRANCISCO

The issue that seems most crucial revolves around fostering Catholic culture in every school community. There is a corollary to this that involves challenging those who minister in Catholic schools to develop their own faith lives and to foster faith communities that will proclaim and apply Gospel values effectively. In recent months, we at the Department of Catholic Schools

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