

**AND THESE SIGNS
WILL ACCOMPANY
THOSE WHO BELIEVE
(2/3)**

Rudolf Schulze

The **first characteristic**, then, of a Catholic school faculty is a faith-works spirituality. The school itself is the work of a loving God who has called "faith-full" men and women together in an atmosphere conducive to learning. This atmosphere or *Gemeinschaft* (10) becomes the context, (the sower's rich soil), in which the Gospel can be preached and heard -- where the blindness of ignorance, the nakedness of confusion, the loneliness of despair, and the hunger for love, self-esteem, and competence are eradicated. To say that God loves us is faith; but it is not enough. God uses teachers to show his love, and that is faith-at-work or faith-in-works. And thus the "sign" or result of a believing, committed faculty is the formation of the Christian person. In his encyclical letter "Christian Education of Youth (*Divini Illius Magistri*), (31 December 1929), Pope Pius XI underscores the end and object of Christian education when he writes:

The proper and immediate end of Christian education is to cooperate with divine grace in forming the true and perfect Christian, that is, to form Christ Himself in those regenerated by baptism, according to the emphatic expression of the Apostle: "My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you." For the true Christian must live in a supernatural life in Christ Hence the true Christian, the product of Christian education, is the supernatural man who thinks, judges and acts constantly and consistently in accordance with right reason illumined by the supernatural light of the example and teaching of Christ; in other words, to use the current term, the true and finished man of character. (11)

In order to effect and realize this end or object of Christian education, competent educators must realize and acknowledge that they are

searchers of wholeness; they meant to be one within themselves, one with their neighbor, and one with their God. They want the fullness of the love of God that comes from interior respect and from an outreach to others. But they recognize the inward struggles taking place in their own lives between the 'spiritual self' and the 'unspiritual self' (Romans 7:14). They find themselves fragmented, divided people, in need of healing. If they are content to live fragmented lives, they will not be good influences on children and youth. (12)

The **second characteristic** of a Catholic school faculty is their understanding of and appreciation for the assistance they give parents in the education and formation of their children. The Second Vatican Council in its "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Guadium et Spes*), clearly states that parents are the "first and foremost educators of their children;... (who) create a family atmosphere for a well-rounded personal and social development among children." (13)

Pope Pius XI had addressed this question in 1929 by stating: *Accordingly, that education, as a rule, will be more effective and lasting which is received in a well-ordered and well disciplined Christian family; and more efficacious in proportion to the clear and constant good example set, first by the parents, and then by the other members of the household...* (14)

In today's difficult world of fragmented, divided homes and single-parenthood, the Catholic educator seldom encounters the ideal family. And beyond the family structure itself, the Catholic educator, in the face of society's materialistic and hedonistic values, often stands alone in stark contrast to the parents of his/her students. And yet, the "children of the values of the streets are also the children of the Kingdom of God." (15) In assisting parents in educating their children, the Catholic educator offers a model of unselfishness, service, sharing, compassion, honesty, and integrity in conscious opposition to society's misplaced values of winning, grabbing, accumulating, consuming, and enjoying.

The Reverend Harold A. Buetow, in his monumental work, *The Catholic School: Its Roots, Identity, and Future*, discusses the role of teachers and schools in cooperating with parents: *And we must enhance the parents' role. The role of parents as the prime educators of their children is crucial, resulting (when successful) in a multiplier effect on the educational efforts of the school. Parents themselves must be taught to lend their support to their children by providing the children with a fixed time and place to study, helping when possible with their assignments, and taking an active interest in their academic progress and school activities. (16)*

The **third characteristic** of a Catholic school faculty is the understanding of the various relationship models within the school itself. In the "teacher-to-student" model, educators are able to initiate good personal relationships with students through mutual respect which the school environment creates and enables. Ultimately, teachers invite students to become believing adults in and through the example of their lives and the way in which they teach. Buetow discusses this model when he writes:

Teacher-student relationships might be fully developed, embryonic, or somewhere in between. Most pupils would be too young for the degree of reciprocity which is required for fully developed personal relationships, and to have full reciprocal relationships with every member of a class of forty would be wearing, to say the least. Good teachers are able to allow glimpses of themselves as human beings to slip through to their pupils and are receptive to the same from the pupils. (17)

In the "student-to-student" model, students share their education with one another from the example of their teachers and thus a kind of apprenticeship emerges in which they are able to share their belief and works with one another. In the "teacher-to-teacher" model, students are able to see and imitate what teachers do and how they do it together. Students learn when they see their teachers learning.

The **fourth characteristic** of a Catholic school faculty is that of collaboration wherein each one is able to support and rekindle the common flame bringing to each one a collective, collaborative, collegial kind of enthusiasm. Teachers teach, but they are also taught. In *Distinctive Qualities of the Catholic School*, the Reverend Edwin J. McDermott, S.J., discusses this collaboration as "community":

Catholic schools have been brought into existence by a believing community of laity, religious, and clerics. In these schools, students and parents, teachers and administrators form the mystical body of Christ. They are his voice to proclaim to this century the Good News of salvation. This community is not primarily a matter of social arrangement; it is born of the Spirit and a common vision of the meaning of life. When this vision is founded on the death and resurrection of Jesus, it

inspires many forms of Christian living and the Catholic school is one expression of this vision. (18)

The **fifth characteristic** of a Catholic school faculty is a clear, evolving, self-evaluating understanding of what they expect to produce. In other words, in our wildest dreams, what does the graduate of a Catholic grammar school or high school look like on graduation day? This product, however, is the result ("sign") of clearly articulated **goals** ("belief") which emanate from a spirit of real collaboration which at one and the same time is mindful of and guided by the light of the mandates and traditions of the institution itself.

When speaking about goals, schools often confuse or interchange words like **goals**, **aims**, and **objectives**. Buetow draws clear and meaningful distinctions which are helpful here: *We think the term "goals" more appropriate for a variety of reasons. One is that goals seem more long-ranged and comprehensive than other terms.... In this analysis, goals differ from aims, which are more nebulous, and from objectives, which are often matters of hopes, dreams, and velleity.... effective goals answer ultimate questions like "why?" and look for the essential "shoulds." To be meaningful, goals need frequent and careful scrutiny, for goals shape the direction of activities.... goals should not be remote and high sounding, but close, detailed, specific, and meaningful. (19)*

All of this brings us to the "product," the "signs," or the "results" of a believing, committed community of faculty and administrators. It brings us from the question of "Why?" to the question of "How?" and thus to a comprehensive understanding of curriculum: religious, social, psychological, and academic. This curriculum incarnates and gives meaning to a school's clearly articulated vision or mission – a mission which is grounded in a living tradition and which is entrusted to and carried forth by committed, believing men and women. The curriculum may not guarantee, much less satisfy the myriad prerequisites for colleges' entrance requirements; the curriculum may not substantially raise test scores. But it must, in the last analysis, meet the students where the students are: address and take into serious account their God-given talents and strengths, their weaknesses and the limitations; design curriculum and programs which will enable them to discover who they are as natural human beings before God; and help and encourage them to develop all that they are so that they may become truly educated Christians.

Pope Pius XI describes the truly educated Christian as one who *does not renounce the activities of this life, he does not stunt his natural faculties; but he develops and perfects them, by coordinating them with the supernatural. He thus ennobles what is merely natural in life and secures for it new strength in the material and temporal order, no less than in the spiritual and eternal. (20)*

Saint Ignatius in the "First Principle and Foundation" of his *Spiritual Exercises* asks the exercitant to consider that "Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul." (21) One who "praises" God is one who has self-knowledge, self-appreciation, and self-acceptance, or at-least the desire for these gifts. One who "praises" God is one who knows who he/she is as a created being before God and how he/she might serve the God whom he/she reverences. This knowledge, appreciation, and acceptance is no small accomplishment and certainly entirely unattainable within an eight- or four- or twelve-year Catholic education. And yet, it is a beginning -- that time of formation from Baptism to true confirmation in the faith. As O'Malley points out: *But grace builds on nature; you can't sow seed on ground unplowed and unprepared for it. (22) Buetow affirms this theme of the power of grace when he writes that grace does not contradict nature but builds upon it. Grace can help in the process of a person's actualization, or becoming, or growing to perfection Theo-*

logian Karl Rahner developed a contemporary theology of grace: one which safeguards God's free initiative and at the same time avoids seeing grace as a foreign element in the universe, extrinsic to the world in which we live This grace, God's self-gift, actualizes the core of human life. (23)

The Catholic school, therefore, in designing its curriculum takes as its focus the "graced" and "grace-full" student whom it is trying to form for the end for which he/she was created. Canon Law synthesizes the matter of a human person's formation: *Since a true education must strive for the integral formation of the human person, a formation which looks toward a person's final end, and at the same time toward the common good of societies, children and young people are to be so reared that they can develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual talents, that they acquire a more perfect sense of responsibility and a correct use of freedom, and that they be educated for active participation in social life. (24)*

Thus, the central curricular question becomes: How will we enable and empower this student to see, understand, accept, and celebrate himself/herself as one who "praises" God? And how will we accomplish this and still teach him/her to read, to think, and to write?

The curriculum, (and the nearly equally important program of extracurricular and co-curricular activities which it must necessarily include), is not definitive, static, and unchanging. Rather, it is dynamic, processoriented, and self-evaluation.

(10) **Geminschaft**: "The **Geminschaft** Model is an association of people who have special commitment, a sense of unity, a consensus on goals and an awareness of their specialness The sense of specialness of their school elicits an emotional quality of dedication and mission; it also elicits enthusiasm and voluntarism. The second quality of the **Geminschaft** Model is community, which means more than a Job-oriented group. It is mutual support and appreciation: it is trust and caring; it is justice and social cohesion. All these elements create community and produce satisfaction among teachers, students, parents, and other supporters of the school..." Cf., Edwin J. McDermott, S.J., **Distinctive Qualities of the Catholic School**, (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Educational Association, 1985), p. 16.

(11) Pope Pius XI. "Christian Education of Youth (**Divini Illius Magistri**)," (Boston, Massachusetts: The Daughters of Saint Paul, n.d.), pp. 50-51.

(12) Edwin J. McDermott, S.J., **Catholic Schools Look Ahead**, (Washington, O.C.: National Catholic Educational Association, 1980), p. 47.

(13) Second Vatican Council. "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (**Gaudium et Spes**)," in Austin Flannery, O.P., ed., **Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents**. (Northpoint, N.Y.: Constello Publishing Company, 1975), #3.

(14) Pope Pius XI. "The Christian Education of Youth. (**Divini Illius Magistri**)," Boston, Massachusetts: The Daughters of Saint Paul, n.d.), p. 39.

(15) William Mann, F.S.C., "And by Association ... Schools," 18th Annual Huether Workshop, Chicago, (November 17, 1988), p. 1.

(16) Harold A. Buetow. **The Catholic School: Its Roots, Identity, and Future**. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1988), p. 267.

(17) *Ibid.*, 248-249.

(18) Edwin J. McDermott, S.J., **Distinctive Qualities of the Catholic School**, (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Educational Association, 1985), p.22.

(19) Harold A. Buetow. **The Catholic School: Its Roots, Identity, and Future**, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1988), p. 72-73.

(20) Pope Pius XI. "Christian Education of Youth, (**Divini Illius Magistri**), Boston, Massachusetts: The Daughters of Saint Paul, n.d.), p. 53.

(21) Louis J. Puhl, S.J., ed., **The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius**, (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1951), #230.

(22) William J. O'Malley, S.J., "Converting the Baptized," **America**, vol. 161, no. 8, (September 30, 1989), p 181.

(23) Harold A. Buetow. **The Catholic School: Its Roots, Identity, and Future**, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1988), p. 279-280.

(24) Canon Law Society of America. **Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition**, translated under the auspices of the Canon Law Society of America. (Washington, D.C.: Canon Law Society of America, 1983), #795.