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Recovering an Authentically Catholic
Philosophy of Education

The Renewal of Catholic Schools: Spritual Flourishing

Posted on March 24, 2013 by theCatholicEducator

As Andrew Seeley points out in his post [Spiritual Poverty](#) commenting on the words of Pope Francis, loneliness and emptiness afflicts many in Western culture. For many, this spiritual poverty begins at a young age – while in school. Public schools institutionalize this loneliness and emptiness systematically, though not intentionally, because they have removed morality, virtue, and religion from schools. As Cardinal George points out in the introduction to his archdiocese’s [Strategic Plan for Catholic Schools](#),

[T]he most important lesson any of us learns is that God loves us. Secure in that love, students are free to raise any questions and develop their talents and capacities in an integrated way. Our schools are intellectually free. Students may ask about God, about their own destiny, about why they are alive. In public and other government-sponsored schools, students are not free to raise these and other questions that are basic to human happiness.

Yet, when so many at Catholic schools are not faithful witnesses to the Gospel ([see the experience of Bishop Vasa](#)), then, even at Catholic schools, this loneliness and emptiness find their way into the hearts of its students. Our schools desperately need, in order to preach the fullness of God’s love for each student, teachers and administrators that are joyful witnesses to the Gospel as taught and explained by the Church. As Pope Paul VI poignantly notes in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (41),

[T]he first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time *given to one’s neighbor with limitless zeal. ... Modern man listens more willingly to witness than to teachers*, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses. *[emphasis mine]*

A renewal of Catholic Schools depends primarily upon the re-invigoration of schools with leaders and teachers who joyfully, humbly, and faithfully witness to the Gospel and, in same fashion, pass on the Deposit of Faith entrusted to the apostles by Jesus.

Bishop Vasa understands this. While [he has postponed the plan](#) to insist on a statement of faith from all teachers, I pray that he finds the right pastoral means to implement change at the Catholic schools under his pastoral care.

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