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## Reimagining the Catholic School, edited by Ned Prendergast & Luke Monahan

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the full sacramental life of the Church” (p. 77). As the percentage of non-Catholic students grows in urban Catholic schools, it is interesting to read of the religious and sacramental instruction which is an integral part of life at Gesu.

Another uplifting part of Gesu’s story is the amazing amount of philanthropy which has been spearheaded by a Philadelphia executive named Winston Churchill (no relation to the British Winston Churchill), who is a former classmate of Father Bur. The book tells of many generous donations of time as well as talent which have benefited the school. These benefactors have solicited million dollar contributions in order to set up an endowment fund which will generate income for future operations. Readers will also be interested to learn that the board members of Gesu School belong to many faiths and ethnicities.

Whether one is a teacher, principal, administrator, pastor, or student, this reviewer recommends this book as an insight into standards to which any school, but particularly an inner-city school, can aspire. The book, which also includes a photo journal, will truly inspire and uplift every reader. As the author states: “So yes, it’s religion, but only partly, and social values, but only partly, and community needs, but only partly. It’s mostly about the children, the children of God” (p. 81).

*Sharon Zogby is a reading specialist and the assistant principal at Holy Family Parish School in Peoria, IL.*

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## **REIMAGINING THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

NED PRENDERGAST & LUKE MONAHAN, EDS.

VERITAS, 2003

\$25.00, 290 pages

*Reviewed by Christopher MacGuire*

In March 2001, the Marino Institute of Education, established by the Irish Christian Brothers, spearheaded a project to bring a diverse group of Church leaders and professionals together to discuss many of the Catholic Church’s pending issues. There was great representation by dioceses, schools, and parishes. These parish advisors, school administrators, religious education

directors, vowed religious men and women, teachers, chaplains, and catechists participated in a 2-day conference focused on the discussion of the Catholic Church's state of affairs. These 60 participants created a wealth of knowledge and experience from around the world. Even though the workshops were held in Ireland, the participants originated from the United States and other parts of Europe. This presented an interesting arena to gain a more global perspective on where the Catholic Church is now and where she is heading. Lastly, the event was highlighted by a series of speakers that would spark rich conversations on a number of Church concerns. Naturally, the possibility for discussion was endless, but organizers encouraged the dialogue to be centered on parish-school relationships and how they relate to the development of faith.

One of the participants explains,

Conferences fall into two categories: been there, done that, got the T-shirt variety, which soon becomes a faded memory, and there is the other kind, a much rarer species; it is the sort that disturbs and provokes and surpasses all our expectations. (p. 274)

This conference was evaluated positively by many of its participants. They were then asked to submit reflective papers on the experience. This type of follow-up sustained the message of the conference.

*Reimagining the Catholic School* includes a brief description of the authors that contributed essays. All 27 essays were analyzed and grouped into one of four headings: Spiritual Core, A Caring Community, Realizing the Purpose, and Challenging Voices. In some of these papers, one can find thoughtful discussions of topics, accented by colorful images from stories and personal anecdotes. Other authors took a more analytical approach by presenting data from research that was conducted in their communities.

Even though this successful conference occurred in Ireland, the spiritual engagement can be applied to any number of societies and not simply a European one. This book is presented to the reader in such a manner that each chapter can be read individually, which allows for a person to find topics of discussion that are pertinent to one's own interests. Most of these essays are real-life stories, a form of group therapy, which can help educators place their own personal experiences into perspective. This book is not written expressly for teachers or other members of the education field; it is written to all Catholics and challenges the reader to question his or her own role in this great mission of sharing the teachings of Christ and the Catholic Church. The editors were successful in compiling the submitted works and

organizing them into one of the four categories. However, on more than one occasion some of the ideas presented by the different authors became redundant. Naturally, this is something to be expected since the authors participated in the same event and wrote on their impressions of the conference.

On several occasions the central themes of student and educator are enveloped by rich images portrayed by Gospel readings and a general understanding of the Catholic Church. In an essay, Groome writes, "it [spirituality] invites teachers to bring their own souls and their 'deep heart's core' convictions in faith to the teaching task, and likewise that they engage the souls of their students, reaching into their 'deep heart's core' as persons" (pp. 40-41). Groome presents a powerful message where educators are called to live their faith through action and not simply through words taught in religion class. Furthermore, concrete examples of how schools can enhance their faith development programs are included within the pages of this book. For example, a religion program overview is discussed by Gallagher, Prendergast delineates a series of partnerships between interested parties, and a primary teacher profile questionnaire is presented by Mairtin.

Extensive emphasis is placed on understanding the adolescents of today and their particular role in the present society. Janssen discusses how the youth are always changing with the times, desperately finding the best fit for them. This state of eternal change brings about internal turmoil, anxiety, and in some cases despair: "The young are eager to believe, but reluctant to belong" (p. 70). Similarly, Gaffney suggests that in order for one to understand today's youth we need to be familiar with the psychological development in schools to give students meaning: "It seems inevitable that schools and religion teachers will have to deepen their understanding of psychological development and integrate that understanding into their canon of beliefs in a meaningful way" (p. 87). In addition, several authors also discuss the need for youth to actively participate in society, the heightened awareness of multiculturalism in our world, and how important it is for students to foster a sense of service. Sadly, there is mention of how young people "seek the Church, but Church leaders have squandered much of their moral authority away" (p. 104).

Unfortunately, the leadership crisis within the Church is of great concern and it is discussed by a number of authors. However, O'Keefe states that this is an opportunity for improvement and that the Catholic tradition might be failing in the leadership's transparency and accountability, but not in faith. Blanchard discusses views on this problem and explains the need for a servant leader. Furthermore, some thoughts were presented on the lack of funding that schools are receiving due to the impact that the child abuse scandals have had on potential benefactors. This has forced the Catholic schools to

seek help from Federal funding agencies, which in turn have strings attached. For this reason, there is a push for parishes to become proactive and concerned with issues of public relations. Ultimately, whether in Europe or North America, the same critical issues plague the livelihood of the Catholic Church. This book presents honest answers to some of these concerns and sets the stage for the reader to challenge one's own beliefs.

*Christopher MacGuire is a dean of students at Bishop Kenny High School in Jacksonville, FL.*

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## **THE RESTLESS HEART: FINDING OUR SPIRITUAL HOME IN TIMES OF LONELINESS**

RONALD ROLHEISER  
DOUBLEDAY, 2004  
\$19.95, 208 pages

*Reviewed by Dana Bayer*

“No person has ever walked our earth and been free from the pains of loneliness....To be human is to be lonely” (p. 3). This shared human experience of loneliness is the focus of Rolheiser's *The Restless Heart*. The author asserts that the loneliness that all humans feel is at the very center of our being. This book takes an in-depth look at loneliness from both secular and Christian perspectives. It examines the sources of loneliness, the dangers, the potential value, and finally the spirituality of loneliness using stories and examples from the author's personal experience as well as contemporary and ancient sources.

The book is divided into two parts. Part I discusses the nature of loneliness in our world today and attempts to bring the problem into focus. Rolheiser takes a candid look at our culture and the circumstances that contribute to our feelings of aloneness, citing among other factors, the transient nature of people, the decline of the family, and the influence of the media.

The first chapter is a look at the problem of loneliness faced by so many. Unable to give a specific definition, Rolheiser generalizes loneliness as an