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Distinctive Qualities of the Catholic School (2nd ed.), by Edwin J. McDermott, SJ

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do everything in their power to prevent Catholic children from attending public schools. Even absolution could have been denied to “obstinate” parents who refused to comply. The bishops of America responded with the councils of Baltimore in 1884. Dr. Walch notes, however, that both sides in the argument shared one common belief—that education was a vital part of American society.

Parish School graphically portrays the almost logarithmic growth of Catholic schools in America between 1920 and 1964. National Catholic organizations seek one voice for Catholic education in America. Issues of survival now become issues of human rights and due process of law. The world grows up. So does the Church.

Walch appropriately paints the post-Vatican Church as a “Generation of Crises.” Declining enrollments through 1990 force yet again a variety of responses to the needs of Catholic education in America. The loss of vocations in the Church opens the door to more lay participation in Church ministry. The immigration movement is now from the south rather than the east. But no religious orders accompany this movement. At the moment of their success, Catholic schools begin to experience a decline. The pattern repeats.

What was once an ideological question gives way to pragmatism. Power rather than principle is the real issue as Catholics once again consider survival. This “Crisis of Success” ushers in the last decade of the 20th century. For those involved in Catholic education—parents, students, teachers, principals, superintendents, priests, and bishops—*Parish School* is a good read. It gives perspective to the dialogues about Catholic education as the Church stands on the threshold of the third millennium. In one sense there is really nothing new; what we experience today we’ve experienced before. In another sense, the future is limited only by our vision. And regardless of the issue before us, regardless of our part in this grand enterprise, Walch reminds us that we are all cut from the same cloth.

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DISTINCTIVE QUALITIES OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL (2ND ED.)

EDWIN J. MCDERMOTT, S.J. WASHINGTON, DC:
NATIONAL CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION, 1997.

Reviewed by Maria Ciriello, O.P.

The NCEA Keynote series was inaugurated with McDermott's *Distinctive Qualities of the Catholic School* in 1986. At that time there were 9,120 Catholic schools with 81.2% lay teachers. Ten years later, this second edition is particularly pertinent to lay teachers who comprise 91.6% of the faculties in 8,231 Catholic schools (National Catholic Educational Association, 1997).

Much has happened to influence the development of Catholic education between these two editions. The Congregation for Catholic Education issued *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal* in 1988. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement reaffirming their support for Catholic schools in 1990. The National Congress on Catholic Schools for the 21st Century was held in 1991. *Catholic Schools Make A Difference: Twenty-Five Years of Research* was written by John Convey in 1992. Bryk, Lee, and Holland's study of Catholic high schools, *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*, was published in 1993. The Vatican released the English edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in 1994. Galetto's study of the beliefs and efficacy of elementary lay teachers of religion was completed in 1995.

On the brink of the 21st century the adage "the more things change the more things remain the same" holds for Catholic education. Ensuing events of the last decade have given us a clearer understanding of the characteristics of those teaching in Catholic schools, the success and effectiveness of Catholic schools for their students, the support these schools enjoy in the Church and the wider community, and the goals and hopes for Catholic education in the future. Yet the core values and essential elements of Catholic education remain the same. McDermott's work reiterates this striking fact, a fact that justifies the reprinting of this second edition. The new edition repeats almost the entire text of the first while incorporating more of the salient literature affecting Catholic schools.

In chapter one, "Life to the Full," McDermott repeats the theological argument justifying Catholic education he presented in the first edition. By recalling events in the life of Jesus and his command to "Go teach all nations" (Matt. 28: 16-20), McDermott asserts that "The Catholic school is a living testimony of millions of Christians that Jesus is alive in his community and is continuing his promise..." (1997, p. 2). This premise provides an eloquent basis upon which to build the mission statement of every Catholic school.

In the second chapter, "Catholic Education: Learning and Believing," excerpts from the document *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* and a brief historical account of the development of Catholic secondary education are incorporated into the original text. These additions will be particularly helpful to those who may be unaware of the context of Catholic schooling. It is unfortunate that some of this updated material is not incorporated into the summary statements at the end of the chapter.

The third chapter, entitled "Catholic Education: Who's Right? Whose Right?" discusses the role of parents in the education of the child. Beginning with a philosophical and theological treatment of the nature of the child and young adult, McDermott relies on Church documents as sources to develop this portrait. This academic approach may be unfamiliar and perhaps unconvincing to those Catholic school educators who obtained their academic training in secular institutions. Ordinarily, in the standard Foundations of Education class, the student would be exposed to multiple, divergent philosophical and psychological views of the nature of the child/student. It is unfortunate that McDermott's treatment did not acknowledge and contextualize these multiple perspectives and present a convincing argument justifying a unique view of the student appropriate to Catholic education by virtue of our faith and the mission of the school. Later in this section, McDermott mentions a number of documents which inform and support a common language for the Catholic view of the student. It would have been extremely helpful to supplement the knowledge of the reader by providing the complete text of these documents incorporated as an appendix.

The sections relating the rights and responsibilities of parents in the education of their children, the relationship of the institutional Church, and the role of teachers and administrators in assisting parents in their responsibilities to educate their children are essentially the same presentation that appeared in the first edition with one exception. There is an additional section called "Support for Catholic Schools," which recounts the commitment of the bishops to Catholic education. The glaring omission in this chapter is the lack of pertinent references from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The *Catechism* addresses characteristics of community, the responsibilities of parents in caring for their children, and the role of leadership in fostering sound institutions in the Church and society. The Catholic educator reading McDermott's text would do well to supplement it with the insightful Catechism resource.

The fourth chapter, "Permeation: Values or Hidden Agenda," presents an overview of moral valuing and a historical account which justifies its inclusion in the Catholic curriculum. This chapter's strength is the solid case it builds for the way schooling is appropriately conducted in an institution whose avowed mission is to promote values. Its possible shortcoming is the failure to incorporate the value of worship as the fourth constituent element of Catholic education along with message, community, and service. This fourth element, specified by the bishops in the *National Catechetical Directory*, is critical to an informed Catholic witnessing to faith and a tangible way for the Catholic community to demonstrate its values publicly.

In the last section, the author presents suggestions for using the text's contents in staff development programming. These suggestions were first published in the original edition; it is too bad that they have not been updat-

ed to incorporate technology and other techniques of study appropriate to adult learners.

Catholic schools are presently enjoying a renaissance and concomitant respect. Public educators at all levels are looking at the characteristics of Catholic schools to find new ways to improve the education of all children. The secret of the success of Catholic schools has been their focus on the dignity and worth of every child, the acknowledgment of the role of parents, and the dedication and sacrifices of countless administrators and teachers to see that the dual mission of academic excellence and religious formation remains at the heart of the educational experience.

The future effectiveness of Catholic schools depends on the ongoing dedication of a professionally educated and faith-formed leadership and staff. In the light of changing personnel patterns in Catholic schools, which include large numbers of individuals who have not had the benefit of formal Catholic education beyond high school, this work will provide a much-needed resource. It is recommended as essential reading to every Catholic school educator.

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