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Introduction

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FOCUS SECTION

INTRODUCTION

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The Lord loves the stranger. (Dt 10:18)

We are at the beginning of an inculturation process for Catholic schools in which diversity includes not only the face and culture of those we serve, but also their religious beliefs. Interreligious dialogue, therefore, enters into any conversation on diversity.

The cultures to which we belong are constantly in flux. Americans come in all sizes and shapes, urban and rural poor, and male and female wealthy. We no longer can define ourselves as belonging to one culture, for if we map ourselves we will realize that we share membership in a variety of cultures.

In this issue of *Catholic Education*, we present a concept of diversity which sharpens the awareness of external multicultural differences and incorporates a religious dimension which expresses the Catholic identity about which we so often speak. In order to deviate from the norm of such publications on multiculturalism, the articles center around a case study of what was done in the past, what can be done in the future to foster leadership, what is common practice, and what expands the notion of diversity to include interreligious dialogue.

As Catholics rooted in justice and ethics, we are propelled to incorporate the following concepts into our schools' mission: To serve a diverse population; to encourage leadership among minorities; and to promote interreligious dialogue. The success of Catholic education relies on its ability to promote respect for the rights of cultures, diversity, and the universal bonds of humanity.

Only when we promote a transcendent vision, transforming ourselves and inspiring our students, faculty, and parents to respond to social transformation, can the Catholic school community accept that the "stranger" is Jesus.

Gerald M. Cattaro is director of the Center for Non-Public Education and associate professor in the Graduate School of Education at Fordham University.

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