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Editors' Comments

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EDITORS' COMMENTS

When a Catholic school closes, as hundreds have in recent years, pain and anger often sweep across a parish. Some have said that the entire community experiences the various stages of grief, first identified by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in *On Death and Dying* (New York: Macmillan, 1969): denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. While the denial is difficult to avoid, the mailboxes of pastors, superintendents, bishops, and board members can quickly fill with angry letters, laced with harsh language not worthy of the Catholic community. More than one bishop has observed that the tenor in such letters is incredible. People often write in anger things that they would never say to another human being in person. Bargaining takes the form of promises of fundraisers and increased enrollment, new marketing efforts, and even requests for outright cash gifts. Depression soon follows, especially if those in authority renege on an earlier decision. The only thing more painful than learning one's school is to close is the vacillation recently observed in some dioceses. Formal announcement that a school will close results in some high-level bargaining, which in a few cases has produced a reconsideration of the decision, or a stay if certain financial conditions are met.

Pastoral care during such times is essential, and thoughtful Catholic educators at DePaul University chronicle in this issue a process of compassion implemented in the Archdiocese of Chicago during recent school closings. The essay is required reading for anyone facing this situation.

Our focus section engages the Catholic intellectual tradition, offering a contemporary response to a challenge first articulated many years ago by John Tracy Ellis. Jim Heft discusses the relationship between Catholic education and social justice. The review of research summarizes some important findings about the nature of religious practice, and a variety of book reviews round out the issue.

We mourn the loss of our colleague, Terence McLaughlin, a long-time member of the advisory board for this journal. Through the efforts of Gerald Grace, we are privileged to reproduce Dr. McLaughlin's obituary at the end of this issue.

Fall typically finds most educators, students, and families returning to a more structured schedule, dictated by the academic calendar. It is a time of new beginnings, new classes, and new students. We hope that this issue offers some new energy and new inspiration for your ministry and service.

Ronald J. Nuzzi, Thomas C. Hunt, Co-Editors