



---

3-1-2008

## Responses From the Field

Thomas C. Hunt

James L. Heft

Ronald J. Nuzzi

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/ce>

---

### Recommended Citation

Hunt, T. C., Heft, J. L., & Nuzzi, R. J. (2008). Responses From the Field. *Journal of Catholic Education*, 11 (3).  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.15365/joce.1103032013>

This Article is brought to you for free with open access by the School of Education at Digital Commons at Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for publication in *Journal of Catholic Education* by the journal's editorial board and has been published on the web by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons at Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information about Digital Commons, please contact [digitalcommons@lmu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@lmu.edu). To contact the editorial board of *Journal of Catholic Education*, please email [JCE@nd.edu](mailto:JCE@nd.edu).

## RESPONSES FROM THE FIELD

---

*In an effort to encourage dialogue and reflection on matters of common concern and interest, we invite responses on selected articles from other educators, who engage the text critically and offer some reflections about its utility and validity.*

---

THOMAS C. HUNT

*Professor, Department of Teacher Education, and Fellow, Center for Catholic Education, University of Dayton  
Editor, Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice*

### INTRODUCTION

The *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* defines the word “lead” as “1... to go before or with, to show the way” (1970, p. 814). It is that concept that struck this reviewer when reading *Making God Known, Loved, and Served* (Notre Dame Task Force, 2006). It seemed that the report brimmed with instances of Notre Dame cooperatively and collaboratively working with various groups and individuals as called for by the cause at hand, in response to the American bishops’ request in their 2005 statement, *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium* (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005).

Catholic educators at all levels should be pleased with Notre Dame’s commitment. The university’s endowment in 2006 ranked 17th in the nation (“College and university endowments,” 2007) and more importantly to Catholic elementary and secondary schools, Notre Dame has demonstrated a willingness to use its substantial resources in myriad ways on behalf of Catholic schools. As the Task Force report states, “Notre Dame will pursue a multi-dimensional strategic plan...to meet four major needs of elementary and secondary Catholic schools outlined in *Renewing Our Commitment*” (Notre Dame Task Force, 2006, p. 4). These needs were identified as:

- To strengthen Catholic identity.
  - To attract and form talented leaders.
  - To ensure academic excellence.
  - To finance Catholic schools so that they are accessible for all families.
- (p. 4)

Notre Dame offered 12 complementary recommendations on behalf of Catholic schools as its tangible manifestation of embodying leadership to

meet these goals. This response will analyze those 12 recommendations and then consider the five general recommendations the report made to the broader Church community regarding Catholic schools.

## **TWELVE RECOMMENDATIONS ON BEHALF OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

The first recommendation, to “recruit and form a new generation of effective Catholic school teachers” (Notre Dame Task Force, 2006, p. 5) was born in 1993 with the creation of the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) to prepare teachers, professionally and spiritually, to serve in under-resourced Catholic schools. This is the catalyst for all of Notre Dame’s subsequent activities on behalf of Catholic schools. Much of the Task Force report deals with those consequences. This response will highlight a few of them. For instance, in the wake of ACE’s teacher formation programs other universities (11 Catholic and one Lutheran) joined in this mission by 2006. They now form the University Consortium for Catholic Education (UCCE) and have produced over 1,500 dedicated Catholic educators in little more than a decade (Notre Dame Task Force, 2006). The success of the ACE teacher effort led to the creation of the ACE Catholic School Leadership Program in 2002. That was followed by the establishment of the ACE Press, designed to provide published materials in support of Catholic education. As confirming evidence of the spirit that animates ACE, the ACE Fellowship program now has over 800 members, all graduates of ACE and the partner institutions of the UCCE. ACE, it is fair to say, is here to stay.

While the percentage of Catholic school administrators is not as overwhelmingly made up of lay persons as is the Catholic school teaching force, nonetheless a movement in the direction of more lay principals, school leaders, and central office staff has occurred in recent decades. It is important to note at this juncture that Notre Dame is following the lead of other Catholic universities in this venture. The University of San Francisco, with its Institute for Catholic Educational Leadership (ICEL), begun in 1976, was first, and was followed in the early 1980s by Boston College, Fordham University, the University of Dayton, and the University of St. Thomas (Traviss, 2007). In 1983, Catholic universities engaged in preparing leaders for Catholic schools formed the Association for Catholic Leadership Programs (ACLP) to better accomplish this purpose. The need of the Catholic school to be a faith community, as expressed in official Church documents, calls for the school principal to assume the leadership role in this process. Notre Dame joined in this effort in 2002 with the ACE Leadership Program. Demographics indicate that in another decade or so leadership in Catholic schools will most likely

be universally lay, and Notre Dame will do its part in preparing qualified lay persons of faith and vision to lead these schools.

In the monumental encyclical in 1929, *Divini Illius Magistri* (On Christian Education), issued in a time of challenge to Catholic education from totalitarian movements from the left and the right, Pope Pius XI declared that anyone working on behalf of Catholic schools was taking part in Catholic action. With the steadily declining number of vowed religious engaged in the apostolate of Catholic education, the ongoing commitment of ACE graduates and those from UCCE institutions represent a modern commitment to the apostolate of Catholic schools.

The fourth recommendation calls for Notre Dame to build a national initiative for the academic improvement of Catholic schools. Scholarly research in the last several decades reveals that Catholic schools have outperformed their public counterparts, especially in serving minority and lower-economic students. Catholic schools, however, still have room for academic improvement. To assist in this process Notre Dame has established a broad-based movement directed at comprehensive academic improvement in Catholic schools, including the creation of the ACE Press to disseminate inexpensive, but high quality academic materials on a national basis.

The justification for the very existence of Catholic schools depends on their uniqueness, their Catholic identity. This identity is achieved by the schools' relationships with Jesus Christ and with the Church that He founded. Notre Dame will attempt, as the report's fifth recommendation, to collaboratively build, in conjunction with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA), a strengthened Catholic identity.

The sixth recommendation concerns the question: What should be the relationship of Catholic colleges and universities to Catholic schools? Have these institutions of higher learning met their responsibilities to Catholic schools? Historically, as noted above, ACLP and individual institutions, such as the University of San Francisco's ICEL have labored in this field. ACLP and UCCE are tangible manifestations of cooperative assistance on the part of Catholic colleges and universities on behalf of Catholic schools.

New kinds of Catholic schools have been founded in recent years. For instance, the Cristo Rey high schools have been established in urban centers. These schools, allied with businesses, provide employment with proximate businesses, and the salaries earned by the students who hail from low income families for part-time work in these establishments enables them to receive a Catholic education. Other schools, such as Nativity and San Miguel schools, are additional illustrations of new forms of organization for Catholic schools. So is "adopting" a school, as Notre Dame has done recently with its

Magnificat schools in South Bend, Chicago, and Washington, DC. Boston College also has a similar partnership underway with St. Columbkille School in the Allston-Brighton section of Boston. Other Catholic universities, while not formally adopting a particular school, have formed mutually supportive networks to increase collaboration between K-12 Catholic schools and Catholic universities. A good example of such a partnership is the Catholic Area Network (CAN), involving 19 Catholic schools and three universities—DePaul, Loyola Chicago, and Dominican. The resulting partnerships are aimed at strengthening and improving struggling Catholic schools. This “adopting” constitutes the seventh recommendation of the Task Force Report.

We live in a changed world. The environment within which people live influences how and why they make the decisions they do. These facts lead to the eighth recommendation of the report. What are the effective tools to market Catholic schools in the 21st century? Notre Dame will utilize its expertise from several of its academic departments to assist Catholic schools in their efforts to communicate what Catholic schools have to offer to potential patrons and thereby maximize their appeal.

The ninth recommendation deals with the changed demographics of the Catholic population in the United States and Notre Dame’s attempts to meet the needs of the Latino/Hispanic community in Catholic schools. Anyone at all familiar with the history of Catholic schools in this nation realizes the fundamental role that ethnicity played in the founding, maintenance, and success of Catholic schools in the 19th and early 20th centuries. American Catholics of German, Polish, Slovak, and Bohemian extraction in particular were most zealous in founding and patronizing Catholic schools. Not only were the parents and children of a certain ethnic branch, but often so were the parish clergy and professional staff of the parish school. The schools affirmed the heritage of the particular ethnic group, of which religion and language were essential ingredients.

The nation’s bishops, in *Renewing Our Commitment* (USCCB, 2005), point out a contemporary challenge that exists. Latinos/Hispanics will soon make up a majority of American Catholics, but only a minuscule of Latino/Hispanic families, some of which are in the ranks of the lower income population, currently send their children to Catholic schools. Research reveals that attendance at Catholic schools contributes to their graduates’ Catholicity. Hence, the opportunity for Latino/Hispanic youngsters to attend Catholic schools will affect the future of the Catholic Church in the United States. A number of obstacles, including cost, confront the attempt to alter the current school attendance pattern of Latinos/Hispanics. Notre Dame’s effort to change this unfortunate state of affairs will be headed by its Institute for Latino Studies and Institute for Educational Initiatives, and by its cre-

ation of an English as a New Language (ENL) program to prepare teachers who will work in Catholic schools.

Struggling Catholic schools are in need of professional advice as to how to meet the plethora of challenges they face. Unfortunately, these schools are not in a position to afford the very guidance that they need to flourish, or even survive. To meet the pressing financial needs of these at-risk schools Notre Dame will create as a first step the ACE Consulting Initiative, which will offer affordable professional assistance to these schools. A second step will consist of seeking professionals who will share their expertise with struggling Catholic schools, on a *pro bono* basis.

The 10th recommendation described immediately above leads to the 11th, which calls for the establishment of a National Parish School Leadership Team Workshop, which will bring together pastors, principals, and school board members to “learn and discuss best practices” in relevant areas in marketing and management, and especially in Catholic identity (Notre Dame Task Force, 2006, p. 12). The cooperation of these vital stakeholders in today’s Catholic schools is indispensable to their success, and Notre Dame will try to work with them to achieve that goal.

School choice is a hotly-contested topic in the United States these days. Catholic teaching has always insisted on the primacy of parents in the education of their children. Both Pius XI in his 1929 encyclical, *Divini Illius Magistri*, and Vatican Council II in its *Declaration on Christian Education* (1966) maintained that this right should be recognized by the civil authority. That is not the case when it comes to honoring this right in terms of financial support in the United States. Distributive justice calls for the full recognition of respecting the rights of conscience of parents in the choice of schools for their children. Social justice calls for the correction of present practice in the United States. Notre Dame will assemble its resources, including those of its law school, in the attempt to rectify this injustice. This reviewer recommends that the proposed periodic conferences of policymakers, public officials and other stakeholders include leaders of other faith-based schools who will add to the expertise and broad-based support needed to bring about desired reform of current government policy. Government’s responsibility, in a democracy, is not to establish one privileged form of financially-supported schools, but rather, it is to see to the education of the public, and in so doing recognize the confessional pluralism of its citizens.

## **FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BROADER CHURCH COMMUNITY**

In *Renewing Our Commitment* (USCCB, 2005), the American bishops repeated the long-standing Church teaching that Catholic schools are the

responsibility of the entire Catholic community. The report made five recommendations to the Church community in light of this teaching. Once again, the practice of collaboration is emphasized.

In 1884, following more than 4 decades of episcopal concern with the anti-Catholicism all too prevalent in the nation's common schools, the American hierarchy issued a statement in the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore on behalf of the erection, support, and patronization of Catholic parish schools. This call, combined with the tremendous contributions made by vowed religious, in the main women, and the financial support of a relatively impoverished laity made the Catholic school "system" a viable reality in the nation. By 1965-1966 Catholic schools enrolled about 5.6 million pupils, constituting 87% of non-public school enrollment in the nation (Hunt, 2004). This wondrous phenomenon was due to the collective efforts of bishops and pastors, vowed religious, and laity. The Task Force's first recommendation to the broader Church community urges the bishops to build on their support in *Renewing Our Commitment* (USCCB, 2005) and speak out in as many ways as possible on the value of Catholic schools.

Historically, the support of the parish pastor was crucial to the success of the Catholic school. That remains true today. In an age where there are fewer priests, the parish school enrolls a smaller percentage of the parish's children, and it requires a higher percentage of the parish's overall income. The Task Force report points out that in a very real way a strong school subsidizes the parish. Accordingly, it urges pastors to do all in their power to advance the cause of their parish school.

The decline in Catholic school enrollment since the mid-1960s has been widely noted. What has received less attention are the successful attempts to reinvigorate Catholic schools in recent years. Innovative programs, as noted above, like the Cristo Rey high schools, Nativity middle schools, and the San Miguel schools dot the Catholic educational landscape. Several dioceses have implemented experimental administrative and governance models, or adopted the practice of stewardship, and the Diocese of Memphis has reopened closed urban schools. To assist in this process of revitalization Notre Dame will convene regional conferences and then a national gathering of all crucial stakeholders in Catholic education for the renewal of Catholic schools in the 21st century.

The 12th recommendation in the prior section addressed the issue of school choice. The fourth recommendation in this section urges Catholic bishops to speak out with a unified voice on behalf of the right of parents to choose the school for their children without a financial penalty, as a matter of religious freedom and social justice.

The principle of subsidiarity is present throughout the Catholic school world. At times, though, a broader entity than the individual school or diocese would be of more value to the cause of Catholic education. Portable benefits for Catholic school professional staff constitute one such instance. To assist in the most effective managing of Catholic schools, Notre Dame offers the services of its management investment expertise, under the approval of the USCCB.

## CONCLUSION

Catholic schools were built on the dedication and sacrifices of many, including a relatively impoverished, and to a considerable degree, immigrant population in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Their evangelization and education of millions of youngsters is an inspiring and unique story. At this critical time in their history the united action of the American Catholic community is necessary for them to survive and flourish. Notre Dame is providing needed leadership in this arena and along with it, an invitation to other institutions to work together for the good of Catholic schools. In the opinion of this reviewer, the University of Notre Dame's Task Force report stands above all as a testament to Notre Dame's collaborative leadership to make a comprehensive attempt on behalf of the revitalization of Catholic schools, and should be seen as such.

## REFERENCES

- College and university endowments. (2007, January 26). *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, A26.
- Hunt, T. C. (2004). Historical overview of Catholic schools in the United States. In T. C. Hunt, E. A. Joseph, & R. J. Nuzzi (Eds.), *Catholic schools in the United States: An encyclopedia* (Vol. 1, pp. 1-11). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Notre Dame Task Force on Catholic Education. (2006). *Making God known, loved, and served: The future of Catholic primary and secondary schools in the United States*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame.
- Pius XI. (1929). *Divini illius magistri* [On Christian education]. Boston: Daughters of St. Paul.
- Random house dictionary of the English language*. (1970). New York: Random House.
- Traviss, M. P. (2007). [Review of Making God known, loved, and served]. *Momentum*, 38(2), 80-82.
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (2005). *Renewing our commitment to Catholic elementary and secondary schools in the third millennium*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Vatican Council II. (1966). *Gravissimum educationis* [Declaration on Christian education]. In W. M. Abbott (Ed.), *The documents of Vatican II* (pp. 637-651). New York: America Press.



JAMES L. HEFT, S.M.

*Alton Brooks Professor of Religion  
University of Southern California*

Will it be said of our generation that we presided over the demise of the most effective and important resource for evangelization in the history of the Church in the United States? Will it be said of our generation that we lacked the resolve to preserve national treasures built upon the sacrifice of untold millions? Will it be said of our generation that we abandoned these powerful instruments of justice that provide educational opportunity and hope for families otherwise trapped in poverty? Surely not. (Notre Dame Task Force, 2006, p. 19)

So reads the stirring conclusion of the report of a task force of 54 individuals, half from the University of Notre Dame, written in response to the U.S. bishops' pastoral statement, *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium* (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 2005). The bishops had invited all of Catholic higher education to help support Catholic primary and secondary schools. But if Notre Dame did not abandon these national treasures, they declared an extended moratorium on their involvement with them. As the Task Force itself acknowledges: "the closure in 1973 of Notre Dame's once prominent Department of Education, a department that for decades had annually educated scores of Catholic school faculty and administrators, is a prime example" (2006, p. 4) of how Notre Dame absented itself from efforts to help Catholic schools. But now Notre Dame is back, and with a great passion and vision for Catholic schools.

This brief essay offers a reflection on the report of the Notre Dame Task Force on Catholic Education's (2006), *Making God Known, Loved and Served: The Future of Catholic Primary and Secondary Schools in the United States*. It was released in December of 2006. Additionally, I was invited by Notre Dame to join a nationally representative group of about 35 individuals who met in September of 2007 at the Carnegie Foundation near Stanford University. The goal of the Carnegie meeting was to explore how a "field" of Catholic educational research might be created. Lee Shulman, the president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching since 1997, convened the meeting. This Carnegie meeting was the first of several such meetings to be held at different Catholic colleges in the country to work collaboratively on improving Catholic schools.

## THE NOTRE DAME TASK FORCE REPORT

Impressive in many ways, the report begins by presenting 12 recommendations that embody Notre Dame's commitment to Catholic schools. It follows these recommendations with five more for "the Church in the United States" (2006, p. 14). Under the able leadership of Timothy Scully, C.S.C., who with Sean McGraw, C.S.C., founded in 1994 the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE), the Task Force outlines a dizzying array of programs and initiatives that only a university that is well endowed and able to marshal considerable additional resources could launch and sustain. Among the first group of 12 are commitments to expand the ACE program, the largest and arguably the most successful program for placing college graduates, regardless of undergraduate major, in inner-city and rural Catholic schools. Also mentioned are programs for the development of leaders in Catholic schools, the cultivation of lay apostolic movements, attracting and supporting the Latino community, getting public funding for private schools, establishing a consulting service, using Notre Dame's marketing expertise to increase the demand for Catholic schools, and establishing an initiative to improve Catholic schools academically. Several of these recommendations are presented as Notre Dame national initiatives.

The initial response to the report by people in education programs at other Catholic universities has been mixed, mainly because certain sections of the report are written in such a way that the programs and efforts of many other Catholic universities—efforts that were carried on with dogged determination for the past 40 years with fewer resources than those at hand at Notre Dame—are not even mentioned. For example, before acknowledging the fact that they themselves had abandoned Catholic schools since 1973, the report states that "over the past forty years, Catholic colleges and universities have frequently neglected their responsibilities to Catholic elementary and secondary schools" (2006, p. 4). Well, some have, but a good number have not.

In many parts of the report, there seems to be an assumption that only Notre Dame sees clearly the challenges Catholic schools are facing, and that only Notre Dame will be able to solve them. It would have been more accurate and gracious had the Task Force noted that at least 30 Catholic colleges and universities, by my own informal count, had remained dedicated for the past 40 years to the task of supporting Catholic schools. When it announces that it will "recruit and form a new generation of effective Catholic school teachers," or "recruit and form effective Catholic school leaders" (p. 5), a person unfamiliar with the rest of Catholic higher education might conclude that no other Catholic universities have been doing this. Had the Task Force included a mention of these Catholic colleges and universities and noted

their contribution, a good bit of the hard feelings about the report would not have been generated. A report that presumes to speak for the national Church even in part might have been expected to take into account what the national Church, and in particular other Catholic colleges and universities, have been doing for the past 3 decades.

That said, those of us who have continued serving Catholic schools are nonetheless ready for renewed collaboration with our Notre Dame colleagues. The issues we need to work on together are simply too important for Catholic schools to allow misunderstandings and hurt feelings to stand in the way. Moreover, Scully and other leaders at Notre Dame are quite aware of these feelings and the unfortunate oversights in their report, and are now sincerely working to collaborate with other Catholic colleges and universities without which even Notre Dame will not be able to fulfill their far-reaching and compelling vision for Catholic schools. I for one am very grateful that Notre Dame has once again heard the call and is exercising now a much needed collaborative leadership that can only benefit Catholic schools in the years to come.

## THE CARNEGIE CONVERSATION

This meeting brought together a nationally representative group of professors, philanthropists, educational innovators, and leaders. In thinking about education as a “field,” it is important to understand more clearly the meaning of field. Fields of research are interdisciplinary. They are not housed in separate departments, or even in distinct colleges or schools of education. This goal recognizes implicitly the need for different kinds of research than most schools of education and universities currently do. Why this shift from departments and schools doing research to creating a field of Catholic education?

A number of answers might be given in response to the question. It might well be the case that too many schools of education at both secular and Catholic universities are not making the difference that needs to be made. It may also be that much of the research that is done currently in schools of education has little relevance beyond those schools, and is often based mainly on narrow questions of practice. Other critics of schools of education point out most education majors, though of course there are exceptions, have low SAT scores when compared to their peers, especially those in the sciences. Finally, some critics feel that schools of education at Catholic universities are oriented primarily to the public school systems in which most of their graduates will teach, and for which there is considerably more government-funded research. There is some truth to all these criticisms. Moreover, it is simply a fact that most schools of education are underfunded and on the graduate level, often

overwhelmed by the number of students who want graduate degrees, not primarily for the intellectual development they might undergo, but rather to increase their pay and rank in the public school system.

Part of the problem reaches well beyond the schools of education. Given all the options that now face talented students, few receive support from our wider culture in choosing a career in teaching, especially at the primary and secondary school level. Good teachers are neither sufficiently recognized nor rewarded for the critically important roles that they play in preparing the next generation for life and work. But schools of education have another challenge, one that comes not from the wider culture so much as from within the academy itself. It is a pervasive snobbery that infects the academy; I am referring to the unfortunate tendency most faculty have of looking down upon areas of teaching and research that emphasize practice. For example, in my own field, if I may call it that, pastoral theology is often thought to demand less intellectual ability than the other sub-specialties like systematic theology, historical theology, or biblical exegesis. Personally, I think pastoral theology is the most intellectually demanding of all the sub-specialties for the simple reason that it requires not only an overall grasp of all the other sub-specialties, but also the ability to understand the people with whom one speaks and the culture in which they live. Pastoral theology demands that a person be able to communicate well, all the while offering both catechesis and critical theological reflection. Unfortunately, the academy has been too long dominated by scientific modes of reasoning, and insufficiently appreciative of the importance of practical reasoning—that is, the type of reasoning that bridges theory and practice, and deepens their critical interaction. That those in the academy who view academic rigor in this way would look down upon disciplines that bridge theory and practice should not surprise anyone.

An even more troublesome fact, however, became apparent in the conversations at the Carnegie meeting, something not made explicit in the Task Force report. Leaders of new models of education—for example, the Notre Dame ACE program, and many other similar programs that other Catholic universities are sponsoring—suggested in conversations that in launching and sustaining their schools they had received little support from educational establishments at Catholic universities. Many of the university graduates who volunteer through university-based programs that place them in underserved Catholic schools are not education majors. During their 2 years of volunteering, they do acquire, mainly in the summers, a masters degree in education. Perhaps the schools of education have simply not caught up with the innovative Cristo Rey and Madonna and San Miguel models of education. I hope that through the new forms of collaboration being promoted now

by Notre Dame among all Catholic universities, new partnerships between these innovative models and schools of education at Catholic universities may now begin to be forged.

How to finance Catholic schools remains a huge problem. John E. Coons, Professor Emeritus of the Berkeley School of Law, and long-time advocate of school vouchers, presented a stirring paper at the Carnegie conference. Coons made a number of claims. First, if we make vouchers a Catholic schools' issue, it is bound to fail. Second, vouchers will benefit both public and private schools systems. Third, it is crucial to remember that the primary educators of children are the parents, and that they should have a choice, not determined by the state, as to how to educate their children. Philanthropists have stepped up to fund the new models of schools mentioned above—funding that currently amounts to over \$80 million. If Coons is right, and I believe he is, then efforts to win vouchers, if they are to be successful, must be bipartisan; that is, they must be supported by leaders in both the public and private sectors. We are obviously a long distance away from that vision of the common good. But it is precisely the argument that Catholics should be making—that is, an argument for the common good, not just the good of Catholic schools. Such a carefully coordinated effort is greatly hampered by the incapacity of existing politically motivated institutions to read where most Catholics actually are—in the political middle.

Another troubling aspect of this entire conversation is that nearly 90% of Catholic children are not in Catholic schools. It should be obvious that Catholic educators should renew and deepen their commitment to Catholic schools as the most effective means of evangelization. But what can be done to improve the religious education of the 90% of Catholic students who are not in Catholic schools? Current forms of parish-based religious education programs have produced only mixed results. Are there ways in which Catholic schools might be able to reach out to the vast majority of Catholic students who are not in them? Are there ways to prepare college graduates so that they can be competent and effective teachers of these students? I do not have the answer to this problem, but I do know that when we beat the drum for Catholic schools, as I have been doing for nearly 40 years, I remain painfully aware of the many Catholic children who for a variety of reasons, often financial, are not able to attend those schools.

One final observation. Many years ago, Fr. Andrew Greeley remarked that if we want our Catholic primary and secondary schools to thrive, we need to do what Catholic universities have done—empower lay boards of trustees with genuine fiduciary authority to take on the responsibility for their well-being. At least in the near future, parish priests will be more and more involved in extensive pastoral ministry, increasingly required to look

after not just one but two or even three parishes. The rapid growth of lay ecclesial ministries has been a welcome development. Why should there not be the same growth in the number of lay persons who take responsibility for the schools in which their children are educated? Surely, there are issues of canon law, church polity, and lay trusteeism, to refer back to a crisis in the early 19th century in Philadelphia. But new times require new structures. What is most important is that the best institutional vehicles for the communication of the faith be established and maintained, and whatever alteration in existing laws and policies are needed, let them be made!

It may well be the case that we are at a sufficiently low point with the many closings of Catholic schools and with the ongoing struggle to keep many of those still existing alive, especially in the inner city, that the only direction we can go now is up. I for one am very grateful that Scully and his colleagues at Notre Dame have sounded the call for a new national effort involving all Catholic colleges and universities—an effort dedicated to strengthening Catholic primary and secondary education.

## REFERENCES

- Notre Dame Task Force on Catholic Education. (2006). *Making God known, loved, and served: The future of Catholic primary and secondary schools in the United States*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame.
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (2005). *Renewing our commitment to Catholic elementary and secondary schools in the third millennium*. Washington, DC: Author.

---

RONALD J. NUZZI

*Director, ACE Leadership Program, University of Notre Dame*  
*Editor, Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice*

## AN INSIDER'S VIEW

In theological circles, it is common to address what is called the “reception” of Church teaching. Reception refers to the general sense of the faithful following upon the articulation or clarification of some official doctrine. It is not a matter of poll-taking or vote-gathering. Reception relies on the *sensus fidelium*, the collective wisdom of believers, to offer some insight and evaluation about the propriety and helpfulness of officially defining certain beliefs. Reception does not in any way infer that the Church is a democratic institution whose belief structure is subject to a majority vote. Rather, it relies on an incarnational theology which affirms that the spirit of God is alive in each member of the community and indeed within the community as

a whole. Reception suggests that God's ongoing revelation is present and real in the lived experience of the Church. Critical reflection on that experience can produce thoughtful, wise, and salient observations regarding future directions and current struggles.

Although the Notre Dame Task Force report (2006), *Making God Known, Loved, and Served* (hereafter MGK) does not represent official Church teaching of any sort, it may be helpful to review its reception in the community of the Church, and especially among Catholic educational professionals. Following the convictions of an incarnational theology, analyzing the reception of MGK should provide some insight into the current challenges facing schools and even suggest some approaches to address them. In the interest of full disclosure and fairness, readers should note that these comments come as an editorial flourish. I write with the comments of our other reviewers already in hand, and as a member of the task force that produced MGK and an editor of this journal. My views, therefore, are decidedly from an insider's perspective. This approach has inherent strengths and weaknesses which readers are trusted to discern and navigate.

### **THE RECEPTION OF *MAKING GOD KNOWN, LOVED, AND SERVED***

Immediately following the publication of MGK, requests for copies of the report started coming into Notre Dame from interested individuals, diocesan personnel, bishops, and university faculty and administrators. Although the full text of the report was available in a PDF format on the university's website, dozens of Catholic leaders asked for thousands of copies of the report. The university has gone to press with the report multiple times already, having produced in excess of 10,000 copies. Requests for hundreds of copies came in from the dioceses of Toledo, Rockville Center, Orlando, Peoria, Madison, and Joliet. Archdioceses requesting more than 100 copies included Philadelphia, Milwaukee, Detroit, Louisville, and Cincinnati. Dozens of other dioceses requested less than 100 copies, mostly for distribution to school boards, pastors, and other educational leaders. Dozens of copies of MGK were sent to educational leaders in the dioceses of New Ulm, Baton Rouge, Burlington, Fort Wayne-South Bend, Belleville, Memphis, Charleston, Lexington, St. Augustine, Savannah, Kansas City, Richmond, Duluth, Gary, and Youngstown and in the archdioceses of Los Angeles, Seattle, Washington, DC, Newark, St. Louis, Portland, Chicago, Baltimore, New York, and New Orleans. While it is difficult to discern at a distance what use those who requested these copies are making of the report—mere distribution, discussion groups, board workshops, formal presentation—or what developments or changes occurred at the local level having distributed and

read the report, clearly the report has achieved a remarkable amount of market penetration and is, by Catholic publishing standards, a best seller. Other documents on Catholic education, even those emanating from the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), do not typically generate such enthusiasm and requests for copies. Something in the report, it seems, highly interested readers, and quickly became one of those discoveries that readers wanted to share broadly with others.

MGK was formally presented to the USCCB, prompting dozens of positive reactions from the U.S. bishops. MGK is, in fact, a response to the USCCB's (2005) earlier, *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium*. In general, the bishops appeared grateful for the response. The president of the conference, Bishop William Skylstad, wrote to the president of the University of Notre Dame, the Reverend John Jenkins, C.S.C., when the convening of the task force was first announced:

I am very encouraged by Notre Dame's response....This document is a clarion call to the entire Catholic community and beyond to engender support for Catholic schools....[It] is a magnificent response to the Bishops' initiative....All of us look forward to ongoing collaboration with you and the Task Force. We are deeply grateful to you for your response to our call. (W. Skylstad, personal communication, December 5, 2005)

A notable response to MGK came from His Eminence William Cardinal Kasper, president of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, and a leader in the field of ecumenical theology. Kasper wrote of the report:

It is impressive because, while indicating ways in which this national treasure is in the midst of crisis, it shows the way the University of Notre Dame in cooperation with other Universities, Colleges and organizations, following the lead of the Bishops' Conference, has committed itself to a long range project of facing this crisis directly and helping resolve it. There are many aspects of the report which could be highlighted. One of the most important is that of preserving and enhancing the Catholic identity of schools. In this concern alone, your efforts to preserve and enhance the Catholic identity, illustrate the commitment of Notre Dame University [*sic*] to the health of the Catholic Church in the USA. (W. Kasper, personal communication, February 1, 2007)

Kasper sees in the report some important new energy that can be harnessed in the form of momentum for the renewal of Catholic schools. His views are shared by many others in applied settings in educational leadership and



among those in the academy. Timothy Walch, Joseph Claude Harris, Sister Rosemary Hovevar, O.S.U., Thomas Groome, and Sister Jane Hosch, O.S.F. all offered similarly encouraging feedback to the report and to the task force.

Given the demand for copies of MGK, its wide distribution, and the generally positive response by bishops and other interested leaders, it seems fair to judge the reception of the report as both welcomed and needed. The coast-to-coast requests for copies for distribution generated enthusiasm, a desire to know more, and in some cases, the willingness to become involved in efforts at Catholic school revitalization. If the spirit is indeed working in and through Catholic educational leaders, MGK was remarkably well received and sparked a conversation that is itself spirit-filled. At some point in the distant future, MGK may well be cited as a watershed event that precipitated a new period of renewal for Catholic schools.

## TWO IMPORTANT CRITIQUES

MGK, like all good things, is not without its flaws or its critics. The shortcomings of the report have been identified by at least two educational leaders: the Reverend James Heft, S.M. (2007), whose review appears in this issue of the journal; and Sister Mary Peter Traviss, O.P. (2007) whose comments were published in *Momentum*, the journal of the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA). Heft and Traviss are serious and well respected scholars, and both played an integral role in the establishment of this journal. Catholic educational leaders, including diocesan central office personnel, bishops, and university faculty and administrators, hold them in high regard, as does this author. So their respective critiques merit serious attention.

Heft and Traviss both give considerable attention to Notre Dame's closing its Department of Education in the 1970s after decades of providing service to Catholic education nationally. The department was founded in 1904, the same year in which the NCEA was born. Traviss is correct in suggesting that the internal reasons were many and complicated, and the pain and doubt experienced were nationwide in scope. The *Notre Dame Journal of Education*, in operation since 1970, also ceased publication in 1977. At the time and for years following, it is easy to understand why Catholic educators may have assumed that Notre Dame was no longer interested in K-12 Catholic schools.

The conclusion that Notre Dame was abandoning Catholic schools, however, or thought them unimportant, is somewhat overstated. In addition to the fairly typical struggles in higher education regarding finances, interdepartmental programs, governance structures, and salaries, archival records at Notre Dame indicate clearly that academic rigor in the department was a pri-

mary concern of then President Father Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C., and of the relevant governance bodies (“Minutes of the 167th Meeting of the Graduate Council,” 1976; “Minutes of the Academic Council,” 1976). There were nine distinct graduate programs in education at Notre Dame at that time (Heupel, 1992). While they had been conducted with varying degrees of success, factors too numerous to detail here led to the university focusing its mission and resources in areas where it could uniquely excel. For a variety of reasons, education did not appear to be one of those areas in the 1970s. This was regrettable, but thought necessary by those responsible for the overall programs of the university, including Hesburgh. Notre Dame and Hesburgh’s intentions were to return to Catholic educational programming at some point, but with a renewed and more academically rigorous approach, one that would stand the scrutiny of university colleagues and competing departments. Notre Dame did not leave the field, slamming a door that would never be opened. This is made explicit in a letter Hesburgh himself recently wrote in support of Notre Dame’s newest graduate degree, a Master of Arts in Educational Administration, designed exclusively for those in Catholic school leadership. To the university Academic Council, Hesburgh wrote:

As you know, Notre Dame has always been highly committed to Catholic schools. They are, after all, an important resource for a Catholic university and a vital source of our students. Moreover, Catholic schools are an essential part of the overall educational mission of the Church, and Notre Dame serves this broader mission by being actively involved in the recruitment, preparation, and ongoing professional development of Catholic school leaders.

When the university closed its Department of education several decades ago, it was always my intention for us to stay involved in K-12 Catholic education....Your proposal says it boldly and well: Catholic schools are at the heart of the Church; education is the best way to call forth the God-given dignity of children; the poor have special claims on us and on our resources, inspired by Christ’s example in the Gospels and the witness of the Old Testament prophets. This mission and these values are congruent with those of this great university. (T. Hesburgh, personal communication, March 7, 2006)

Did Notre Dame close its Department of Education and with it, its degree programs and academic journal? Yes. Did it wait too long, given the struggles of Catholic schools nationwide, to re-engage? Absolutely. But it should not be inferred that there was some lack of confidence in Catholic schools or anything other than a need to get its own house in order. A place with the national visibility like Notre Dame is likely to attract attention for what it does and does not do, but Hesburgh sees the decision as a service to the university and to the broader mission of Catholic education. Arguably, other

educational administrators might concur with such an approach, namely, if you cannot do something well, better not to propagate mediocrity in a field that is already in decline. Wait to engage more robustly. Notre Dame did that, and in some remarkable ways. Scholars such as Heft and Traviss, among others, would no doubt concur that it would be helpful if a few others followed Notre Dame's example in this regard: cease the operation of mediocre programming and associations in Catholic education, and create something new and more alive, better able to address the challenges of today and tomorrow. With planning and appropriate resources, such deaths and resurrections could very well happen with greater speed than Notre Dame's.

Both Heft and Traviss rightly observe that numerous other Catholic colleges and universities have long been at work addressing the needs of Catholic schools, partnering with dioceses, and offering degree and professional development programming targeting Catholic school teachers and principals. They are properly sensitive to the historical record which demonstrates that most of said programming was established when Notre Dame was on hiatus. The Association of Catholic Leadership Programs (ACLP) has a membership list of 30 plus institutions of higher education, and at that table, Notre Dame is a new arrival. Heft, however, may overestimate Catholic higher education's involvement in K-12 schools, or more benignly, may have a more sympathetic view of recent developments. Watzke (2002) reported in the pages of this journal the relative and widespread lack of engagement of schools of education at Catholic institutions with Catholic schools. Department chairs, deans, and professors reported no small measure of disinterestedness in Catholic schools and in the preparation of teachers. It is no secret that University Consortium for Catholic Education (UCCE) institutions, whose members prepare college graduates to teach in Catholic schools, always face complicated intramural politics at universities where there is a school of education, and thrive unencumbered at universities without schools of education.

Moreover, although ACLP institutions are numerous and growing, there is unevenness across programs and serious differences in what constitutes the unique knowledge base and skill set of Catholic school leadership. Like Notre Dame in the 1970s, many ACLP institutions struggle with the quality of their programs. Enrollment and economics influence program decisions, much like we see in K-12 education. Academic requirements vary widely, as do course credits. Some programs are degree-granting, others simply offer licensure. A few programs require some coursework in theology, most do not. Many programs are delivered in large part during summer, when teachers and aspiring administrators can get to a campus for several weeks. A few are online programs, offering a graduate degree, without ever having a real-

time, physical coming together of the class. Most programs have struck some balance between the on-campus experience and the on-line experience. Many programs have a strong focus on spirituality and devote resources to the liturgical life and faith formation of students. Others do not.

Overall program success has also been uneven. While the University of San Francisco's Institute for Catholic Educational Leadership (ICEL) programs are successful and long-standing, other programs have not been so fortunate. Boston College's Catholic School Leadership Program, once thriving and large under the direction of Sister Clare Fitzgerald, was the East coast counterpart to San Francisco's ICEL. But it is no more. It should be noted that Boston College is itself rediscovering its commitment to K-12 Catholic education with the recent advent of its Center for Catholic Education, its partnering with a local Catholic elementary school, and its proximate preparations for becoming the new host institution of this journal. The Catholic University of America has established a new doctoral level (Ph.D.) program in educational leadership, focused on preparing future diocesan leaders for the superintendency and other central office positions. In the same period, however, the University of Dayton suppressed the Catholic school strand of its Ph.D. program in educational leadership, leaving at three the number of institutions with terminal degrees in Catholic school leadership *per se*—San Francisco, Fordham, and The Catholic University of America. The support of some dioceses has been nil and the availability of mid-career professionals to come to campus for weeks of principal preparation programs, however thoughtfully conceived and delivered, has been low. Salary structures in most Catholic schools do not leave teachers with sufficient disposable income to pursue graduate work, making low enrollment in many programs a threat to their continued success and existence.

Even at some large, urban universities, programs are typically small or, serving just the diocese or archdiocese in which they are located. In more than a few places, diocesan central office staff serve as faculty in the program. Members of the advisory board of this journal also report ongoing challenges in securing the support of their respective institutions in a formal way. Perhaps the deeper message of MGK and even of the USCCB (2005) statement *Renewing Our Commitment*, is that the status quo is no longer acceptable. We cannot simply keep doing what we are doing in the ways we have been doing them. For all of the successes of the past 30 years, Catholic education is still facing a crisis. For all of the work that Catholic colleges and universities have put into programs, we are still far from solutions. It is the same spirit of change, of death and resurrection that prompted the recent proposal from the Most Reverend Donald Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, DC, to dissolve both the NCEA and the NCCL (National Conference of

Catechetical Leadership) in order to create a new organization that would be different, new, and reinvigorating. The point is that while much has been done, much work remains. With all due respect to those who have remained engaged over the past decades, and with apologies for the perceived slight, so much remains to be done that none of us ought to rest even for a moment on our laurels.

The Carnegie Conversation, summarized well by Heft, should be a clear and compelling example for charting a course for future collaboration and renewal. Boston College, Loyola University of Chicago, The Catholic University of America, Loyola Marymount University, the University of San Francisco, Marquette University, Alverno College, and the University of Notre Dame together committed to a series of national conferences on the vital issues facing Catholic schools, as a way to focus the energy of scholars and church leaders, and to harness the momentum coming from Catholic leaders nationwide and from MGK. These conferences are intended to engage a variety of stakeholders and to bring into the light our best thinking about academic issues, curriculum and instruction, scholarship, Catholic identity, and stewardship. The research, publications, and convocations resulting from the collaboration of these universities will be inclusive and demanding. All Catholic educational leaders should be expected to participate in some way.

## REFERENCES

- Heupel, D. (1992). *The graduate school at Notre Dame: A historical perspective*. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press.
- Minutes of the 167th meeting of the graduate council, December 8, 1975. (1976). *Notre Dame Report*, 5, 327.
- Minutes of the academic council, March 29, 1976. (1976). *Notre Dame Report*, 5, 379.
- Notre Dame Task Force on Catholic Education. (2006). *Making God known, loved, and served: The future of Catholic primary and secondary schools in the United States*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame.
- Traviss, M. P. (2007). [Review of *Making God Known, Loved, and Served*]. *Momentum*, 38(2), 80-82.
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (2005). *Renewing our commitment to Catholic elementary and secondary schools in the third millennium*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Watzke, J. (2002). Teachers for whom? A study of teacher education practices in higher education. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice*, 6(2), 138-167.