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Editors' Comments

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EDITORS' COMMENTS

Enormous changes are taking place in the landscape of private education, especially in light of economic constraints and the attractiveness of charter schools. In many quarters, people are considering the possibility of opening publicly funded charter schools where explicitly Catholic schools once existed. The hope is that elements of the philosophy of education that animated explicitly Catholic schools could continue in some way in this new entity. This issue's focus section, "Facing Challenges, Remaining Catholic," examines some of these changes and the challenges they present for Catholic school sustainability. The first article explores the internal dynamics of Church law in regard to what constitutes a Catholic school. Canon law is often cited to maintain the status quo. Rev. Phillip J. Brown provides depth and clarity to the discussion. Brown helps us to understand that, within the canonical governance structures of the Church, there is flexibility in regards to school structure but there are also boundaries that define what is essential to a Catholic school. In parallel fashion Charles J. Russo and Gerald M. Cattaro explore issues in civil law that help us define Catholic identity. They articulate the significant challenges of obtaining government funding for a charter system of schools that maintain a strong faith dimension. Through their analysis of case law, they demonstrate that for all their potential to serve children, publicly funded charter schools with a strong faith-based dimension are not feasible. Of course, as cases develop in the future it will be important to examine closely the precedents that are set and how Catholic charter schools might be able to dance the fine line between remaining Catholic and remaining viable. In the third article, Patrick J. McCloskey presents a case study of a diocese that has beaten the odds by continuing to provide quality Catholic education to low-income students thanks to the creative and entrepreneurial thinking spearheaded by a bishop who has an unshakable commitment to providing Catholic education for low-income children, Catholic and non-Catholic alike.

The issues that arise in this focus section are unlikely to go away at any time in the near future. Leaders of Catholic education must honestly and realistically face the daunting challenges of sustainability. They must look for new and creative structures to meet contemporary needs, and they must be vigilant to ensure that this is not at the cost of a full and vibrant Catholic identity. Given the timeliness of these issues, we decided that these articles, which have appeared in other venues, should be made accessible to our readers.

We present two other articles, which at heart deal with features of Catholic identity in Catholic elementary and higher education. David F. Carrithers and

Dean Peterson look at undergraduate economics curriculum and how Catholic colleges and universities can integrate social justice perspectives to create a distinctly Catholic economics curriculum. This approach, which provides a deep knowledge of economic theory, offers business and economics students greater ability to understand and debate perspectives of economics from other disciplines, including arts and sciences. Glenda Lee Black examines the relationship between servant leadership and school climate. Servant leaders take care of their followers, ensuring their effectiveness by meeting their needs and focusing on growth to help them become more autonomous, characteristics that align with the Church's philosophy on leadership. Black finds that when principals and teachers perceive servant leadership to be present, their perceptions of school climate are positive. Curriculum and leadership provide the foundation upon which Catholic schools maintain a strong Catholic identity. When students and staff witness leadership that exemplifies a Catholic understanding of humanity and work to ensure that Catholic and social justice perspectives are vital elements in the curriculum, Catholic identity in these schools becomes palpable.

Finally, Ashley Gabriel reviews Patrick J. McCloskey's *The Street Stops Here: A Year at a Catholic High School in Harlem*, a powerful story of one school's effort to change a community. McCloskey's engaging narrative of Rice High School offers a strong case for the benefits of an investment in Catholic education, particularly in service to communities in urban areas.

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