

Catholic schools
- and public service
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CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC SERVICE

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Suggested introduction: Here are some startling statistics about Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

1. This year the schools have a record-breaking enrollment of 358,000 pupils, more pupils than there are people in cities like St. Paul, Omaha, Miami, or Toledo.
2. Nine thousand, eight hundred and fifty-four teachers instruct these pupils in 435 elementary schools and 83 high schools. One-third of the teachers are lay persons.
3. The Archdiocese's Catholic school system is the fourth largest in the nation, exceeded in size only by the public school systems of New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago.

SERMON OUTLINE

4. One of every **SUNDAY - OCTOBER 21, 1962** Lake Counties attends a Catholic school. Thirty percent of Chicago's school-age children go to Catholic schools.
5. It costs in excess of \$300,000 a school day to operate Catholic schools; the annual bill is 60 million dollars. Catholic school facilities have a replacement value in excess of a billion dollars.

Development: 1. Catholic schools are here to stay. Church law decrees that Catholic children belong in Catholic schools and civil law protects a parent's right to send them there. Sending Catholic children to Catholic schools is a cherished

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2. Nine thousand, eight hundred and fifty-four teachers instruct these pupils in 435 elementary schools and 93 high schools. One-third of the teachers are lay persons.
3. The Archdiocese's Catholic school system is the fourth largest in the nation, exceeded in size only by the public school systems of New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago.
4. One of every four school children in Cook and Lake Counties attends a Catholic school. Thirty percent of Chicago's school-age children go to Catholic schools.
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Development: 1. Catholic schools are here to stay. Church law decrees that Catholic children belong in Catholic schools and civil law protects a parent's right to send them there. Sending Catholic children to Catholic schools is a cherished

tradition which neither the Church nor Catholic parents want to relinquish. Though hard-pressed by the rising costs of Catholic education, most Catholic parents are not disposed to abandon or even to curtail any part of the Catholic school program. While there is some speculation about eliminating some grades from the elementary schools, there is much more practical planning of across-the-board additions to Catholic school facilities on all levels.

2. Citizens of two worlds, Catholic school pupils learn their duties to both God and society. The Catholic school curriculum is designed to help students acquire the skills, ideas, and ideals needed for patriotic citizenship motivated by religious convictions. Catholic school graduates are qualified to vote, eligible for public office, and subject to call for military service. In good times and hard times, in peace and in war, Catholic school graduates have responded generously to governmental appeals for civic service. So it should be, for Catholics are obliged by justice and charity to cooperate with fellow citizens in civic projects that will help our citizenry make progress toward the high ideals to which this nation, under God, is dedicated.

3. For all practical purposes Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Chicago have become an indispensable part of the city and suburban educational enterprise. Here and now the city and suburbs need our Catholic schools. Though obliged to accept all applicants, public schools, many now filled to capacity, could not accommodate the present Catholic enrollment except by putting most classes on double or triple shift or by attempting building projects that would strain public education budgets beyond the limit of presently available tax resources. The fact is that in our area Catholic schools have become so large and prominent that their interests and needs are now public interests and needs even as they remain the special concern of the Church.

Background for Development

1. Catholic schools in the United States are one of the greatest achievements of private initiative in our nation's history.

Within less than a hundred years Catholic schools have developed from modest, struggling mission schools into a nation-wide system of flourishing schools educating well over five million pupils, close to 12% of the nation's school-age children. This development is not the product of good fortune or shrewd management, but of the enthusiasm and self-sacrifice of millions of Catholics deeply convinced about the intrinsic values of Catholic education.

In the short time of less than a century, the practice of sending Catholic children to Catholic schools has become a cherished tradition of Catholic life in our nation. In most new parishes the first building constructed is the parish school and much of the pastor's effort and time is devoted to organizing the kind of school parents want for their children's education. Rarely is it necessary for a pastor to preach about the Church's laws on parents' obligations toward Catholic schools. Most Catholic parents spontaneously and enthusiastically send their sons and daughters to Catholic schools, and if they are not accepted for lack of room these parents are keenly disappointed and sometimes a little resentful. It is not unusual these days for parents to speak not of their duty but of their right to have their children in a Catholic school. This is their way of saying that a Catholic child obliged to lead a good Catholic life is entitled to the basic training in Catholic faith and morals which Catholic schools alone can give.

This parental attitude is forcefully sanctioned by Church law. Canon 1113 states that "parents are bound by a most serious obligation to provide to the best of their ability for the religious and moral, as well as for the physical and civic, education of their children." To Catholic parents it is abundantly clear they fulfill this duty "to the best of their ability" when they make whatever sacrifices necessary to keep their children in Catholic schools. That parental conviction also is sanctioned by Church law which requires Catholic parents to send their boys and girls to Catholic schools unless they are excused for good reasons.

Civil law protects a parent's right to send his children to either a public or approved nonpublic school in compliance

with State compulsory education laws. Freedom to select the kind of school they want is not a parental privilege which the government may give or take away as it sees fit. This freedom is a right immune from governmental interference. This was made clear when the Supreme Court of the United States, declaring unconstitutional an Oregon law forcing all children to go to public schools, made this memorable statement, "The fundamental theory of liberty upon which all governments in this Union repose excludes any general power of the State to standardize its children by forcing them to accept instruction from public teachers only. The child is not the mere creature of the State; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations."

Granted the value of Catholic education and parents' earnest desire for more and more Catholic schools, can Catholics afford to pay the rising costs of Catholic education? This question troubles school officials, pastors, and, to be sure, Catholic parents, too. It is difficult to answer because nobody really knows for certain how much money Catholics are willing to sacrifice for the cause of Catholic education. But it is certain that contributions will have to increase as expenses, particularly for the salaries of lay teachers and expensive new construction, continue to soar.

The present financial predicament of Catholic education has prompted some speculation about abandoning or curtailing a substantial part of the Catholic school program. The most common suggestion is to drop the lower grades of the elementary schools. Other proposals call for half-day Catholic high schools. All admit that these changes are not ideal, but are they necessary because of our financial problems?

A few careful experiments with a curtailed grade school program have been severely criticized by parents who see no good reason why their children should not have the advantages of Catholic education in the lower grades. A majority of parents would prefer double session to dropping the lower grades.

Though deeply concerned about finances and even more so

about the critical shortage of teachers, the Archdiocese is moving ahead with plans for new buildings with seats for an additional six to eight thousand pupils a year. These plans are an expression of confidence in the Catholic laity's ability and desire to continue as far as possible a full program of Catholic education in the Archdiocese.

Catholic schools certainly are here to stay, and more are coming!

2. How do Catholic schools fit into the pattern of American education?

Some critics of Catholic education assert that our schools do not fit at all, that they are alien to the American way, and that they can only be tolerated as an eccentric, peripheral kind of school which sectarian-minded parents want for their children's education.

These critics allege that Catholic schools "may be good for the Church, but are not good for the nation." They accuse our schools of being "a divisive force" undermining national unity. They say our schools spend most of the time "indoctrinating pupils in sectarian beliefs" to the neglect of lessons in civic virtue. As a result, these critics say parochial school pupils "have little iron curtains around their minds," and hence are not interested in the welfare of their nation or neighborhood.

By depicting Catholic schools as self-serving, private, exclusive institutions disinterested in the common good, critics of Catholic education manage to develop a revolting caricature of Catholic schools which discredit them in the public mind. This caricature leaves the impression that Catholic schools do not perform a public service and, therefore, do not deserve any recognition or assistance from public sources.

We Catholics who really know our schools deny these outrageous charges. We repudiate the idea that because Catholic schools serve the Church, they cannot also serve the nation. For Catholic schools the revered motto, "For God and Country," is no empty slogan, but, rather, is the

precise goal toward which the whole Catholic school effort is directed.

By explicit Catholic teaching, Catholic schools are forbidden to be divisive or to neglect instruction in civic virtue. Pope Pius XI made this perfectly clear in a striking passage in his memorable Encyclical on the Christian Education of Youth: "Let it be loudly proclaimed and well understood and recognized by all, that Catholics, no matter what their nationality, in agitating for Catholic schools for their children, are not mixing in party politics, but are engaged in a religious enterprise demanded by conscience. They do not intend to separate their children either from the body of the nation or its spirit, but to educate them in a perfect manner, most conducive to the prosperity of the nation. Indeed a good Catholic, precisely because of his Catholic principles, makes the better citizen, attached to his country, and loyally submissive to constituted civil authority in every legitimate form of government."

In the spirit of this papal directive Catholic school leaders have designed a comprehensive curriculum to develop in the young the ideas, attitudes, and habits that are demanded for Christ-like living in our American democratic society. Courses of study, textbooks, and activities constantly impress upon teachers and pupils their duty to show their love of God in the way they love their neighbors. Could there be any more solid foundation for the virtue of patriotism! And that virtue, too, is explicitly taught. In their catechisms children learn that a "citizen must love his country, be sincerely interested in its welfare and respect and obey its lawful authority." The catechism further teaches that a "citizen shows a sincere interest in his country's welfare by voting honestly and without selfish motives, by paying just taxes, and by defending his country's rights when necessary."

Catholics do not question nor challenge the State's right to enforce laws requiring all schools, public and nonpublic, to meet physical and academic standards necessary for good education. Pope Pius XI's Encyclical acknowledges that the State can enact and enforce laws to make sure that all citizens have the necessary knowledge of their civic and political duties as well as a degree of physical, intellectual, and moral culture

really needed for the nation's common good. As do public schools, Catholic schools comply with State regulations designed to guarantee every child the kind of education required for responsible and loyal citizenship. Even if the State did not insist upon high-quality education in Catholic schools, the Church, sponsoring these schools, would of its own accord demand the kind of excellent education worthy of such sponsorship. Substandard education has no place in a Catholic school.

The best evidence of the public service performed by Catholic schools is the fact that the public draws no distinction between public and Catholic school graduates when summoned to the nation's service. Not even the most dogged opponent of Catholic schools would want to disqualify their graduates from voting or from holding public office. Catholic schools develop full-fledged citizens; what more should the public ask of a school? In war and peace, millions of Catholic school graduates, side by side with public school graduates, have served their nation. Would any reasonable person suggest that a young man be exempted from a call to military service because he had been educated in a Catholic school?

The point we Catholics must put across to our neighbors is that Catholic schools simultaneously serve both God and country, both the Church and the nation. Catholic school products do not have a loyalty divided between Church and State; they have a united loyalty to both, just as their love of God and love of neighbor are united in the practice of Christian perfection.

3. A few years ago pastors of some schools in Maine suspended classes when local authorities discontinued free bus service for parochial school pupils. Recently some Australian Catholics closed parish schools for a week in protest against the government's denial of tax support. At times Catholics in other places have been on the verge of abandoning a parochial school when government officials have spurned parents' requests for such relatively inexpensive services as health examinations and bus rides. Not a few Catholics are of the opinion that shutting down the Catholic school enterprise for a while would be the way to "teach the public and the government a good lesson."

In the Archdiocese of Chicago we dare not close our Catholic schools. Transferring 358,000 pupils to already crowded public schools would create chaotic conditions of which both Catholic and non-Catholic children would be the innocent victims. Most public schools would have to go on double or triple sessions; class size would be increased to sixty or seventy pupils; unqualified teachers would have to be employed to cope with the emergency; crowding of public schools would create serious fire hazards; public school budgets, now at a record-breaking peak, would be strained beyond legally available tax resources; tax bills for public education, now running at from forty to seventy percent of the total tax on property, would have to be increased by thirty to sixty percent.

How often are we told that Catholic parents have a perfect right to send their children to public schools, and yet the plain fact, obvious to any reasonable person, is that the public schools in the Archdiocese of Chicago do not have enough money, enough teachers, enough classrooms, or enough equipment to accommodate 358,000 additional pupils. It is equally clear that a Church order discontinuing or suspending Catholic schools would force government to take drastic measures either to compel the reopening of Catholic schools or to commandeer the use of Catholic school facilities.

These facts lead to the inescapable conclusion that the City of Chicago and neighboring communities need the Catholic schools. They need them as partners with public schools in a united program of high-quality education for the great majority of school-age children. Any person who takes a comprehensive look at schools in our midst must admit, regardless of his views on the desirability of Catholic education, that Catholic schools are now an indispensable part of the city and suburban educational enterprise. The city and suburbs simply cannot get along without them.

Deeply convinced about the intrinsic worth of Catholic education, Catholics are determined to continue their schools and to expand their facilities as needed. Catholics are not disposed to have their schools be used as a political pawn in controversy over tax support of nonpublic education. As good citizens, Catholics do not want to upset public schools by transferring to them thousands of children for whose education they are unprepared. Indeed, Catholics seem to sense a civic obligation to maintain

their own schools for the eminently practical reason that the public schools are in no position to take care of all or most Catholic school-age children.

The point to be made clear to Catholics and non-Catholics alike is that not only Catholics but the public at large have a stake in Catholic schools. Not only Catholics and their Church, but also the whole civic community derives benefit from the high-quality education afforded thousands of pupils in Catholic schools. If these schools were to be discontinued or curtailed or if they were forced for economic reasons to lower their academic standards, the civic community as well as the Catholic Church would suffer the consequences.

Catholic schools and public schools these days have one great common problem, inadequate facilities to give an ever-increasing number of children high-standard education. Both Catholic and public schools need money to construct more classrooms and to pay the salaries of more and better qualified teachers. Every citizen should be concerned about this problem common to public and Catholic schools, and citizens will have to work together towards a solution of the common problem.

In summary, Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Chicago perform a public service (a) by providing a full program of high-quality education for 25% of all school-age children in Cook and Lake Counties (b) by preparing 358,000 boys and girls for their civic responsibilities in the national and local communities (c) by conducting classes and courses fully approved by State authorities (d) by being, for all practical purposes, an indispensable part of the city and suburban educational enterprise.

Application: Catholics should try to dis-
abuse their neighbors of the utterly erroneous idea that Catholic schools play a minor and rather insignificant role in the education scene. In a friendly, non-argumentative way Catholics should attempt to persuade their neighbors that because Catholic schools perform a prominent and valuable public service the public should be interested in their activities and needs.

These are some of the reasons why the Catholic Church is so important to the people of the world. It is a religion that has stood the test of time and is still growing today.

The Catholic Church is the largest Christian denomination in the world. It has over a billion members and is spread across all continents. The Church is led by the Pope, who is the spiritual leader of the entire Catholic community. The Church teaches that God created the world and that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to save the world from sin.

The Catholic Church has a long history and has played a major role in the development of Western civilization. It has been a source of inspiration and guidance for many people throughout the centuries. The Church has also been a source of controversy and conflict, particularly in the areas of social and political issues.

One of the most important aspects of the Catholic Church is its sacraments. These are rituals that are performed by a priest and are believed to be essential for the spiritual life of the faithful. The sacraments include Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, and Holy Orders.

The Catholic Church is also known for its rich tradition of art and architecture. Many of the world's most famous works of art and buildings were created by Catholics. The Church has also been a source of inspiration for many writers and artists throughout the centuries.