

## **CATHOLIC SCHOOL ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE THIRD MILLENIUM**

(What follows is a précis of a letter to teachers from the Congregation For Catholic Education.  
It is important because it states an official position and appreciation of Catholic Teachers.)

*Henry Carr Farm*

1. **We have a crisis of values**
2. **These values assume the form of: subjectivism, moral relativism and nihilism**
3. **Society has experienced: rapid structural changes,**
  - **profound technical innovations**
  - **globalization of the economy**
4. **These changes affect human life:**
  - **-the widening of the gap between rich and poor**
  - **-massive migration from underdeveloped to highly developed countries**
  - **-The phenomena of multiculturalism**
  - **-an increasingly multiethnic and multireligious society**
  - **-a growing marginalization of the Christian Faith**
5. **Specifically in the educational field:**
  - **the scope of educational functions has broadened**
  - **becoming more complex more specialized.**
6. **A call for courageous renewal of the Catholic School.**
  - **The Catholic School must be able to speak for itself**
  - **effectively and convincingly**
  - **not merely a question of adaptation,**  
**but of missionary thrust,**
  - **the fundamental duty to evangelize**
7. **Congregation For Catholic Education addresses this letter to convey a word of encouragement and hope**
  - **...opportune to devote attention to certain fundamental characteristics of the Catholic School**
8. **...if its educational activity is to be effective in the Church and in Society.**
  - **Fundamental characteristics of the Catholic School :**
    - **“a place of integral education of the human person”**
    - **a clear educational project of which Christ is the foundation.**
    - **an ecclesial and cultural identity**
    - **a service to society – a mission a work of love**
9. **The Church mission - to evangelize the world – The Catholic School often the only form of pastoral care**

10. The Catholic School shares responsibility for the social and
  - cultural development of the different communities and peoples
  - to which it belongs by participating in their:
  - joys and hopes
  - sufferings and difficulties
  - efforts to achieve genuine human and communitarian progress
11. The services of the Catholic School to the spiritual and material development of less fortunate peoples is invaluable.
12. The Catholic School's contribution to:
  - the fields of pedagogy and academics...
  - teaching as a mission and true apostolate.
  - pastoral care -the sensitive help...to families which are fragile or have broken up
13. The Catholic School is confronted with children and young people who experience the difficulties of the present time:
  - shun effort and are incapable of self-sacrifice and perseverance
  - lack authentic models to guide them
  - indifferent...non-practicing...lacking religious and moral formation.
14. Difficulties in the political, social and cultural spheres:
  - large-scale poverty and hunger
  - internal conflicts and civil wars
  - urban deterioration
  - the spread of crime in large cities
  - government obstacles - prevent Catholic Schooling
  - finance
15. The Catholic School should offer young people the means to acquire the knowledge they need to find a place in a society strongly characterized by technology and scientific skill. it should impart a solid Christian formation.
16. The Catholic School... for the human person. The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is the heart of Christ's teaching: this is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic School. ...The Catholic School, in committing itself to the development of the whole person ...all human values find their fulfillment and unity in Christ.
  - tendency to reduce education to its purely technical and practical aspects
  - devote greater attention to the essence of education...centered on values and visions.
17. The fragmentation of education, the generic character of the values frequently invoked and which obtain ample and easy consensus at the price of a dangerous obscuring of their content, tend to make the school step back into a supposed neutrality, which enervates its educating potential and reflects negatively on the formation of the pupils. ...education always presupposes...a definite concept of person and life...focuses on person in his

or her integral, transcendent, historical identity... “it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of humanity becomes clear.”

**18. THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL - AT THE HEART OF THE CHURCH**

...increase awareness of the ecclesial identity of the Catholic School. A genuine instrument of the Church... The Catholic School participates in the evangelical mission of the Church...it is a true and proper ecclesial entity by reason of its educational activity, in which Faith, culture and life are brought into harmony.”

19. ...the Catholic School is a place of ecclesial experience...molded in the Christian community. ...school fulfills its vocation to be a genuine experience of Church only if it takes its stand within the organic pastoral work of the Christian community.

20. Unfortunately, there are instances in which the Catholic School is not perceived as an integral part of the organic pastoral work, at times it is considered alien, or very nearly so, to the community. It is urgent, therefore, to sensitize parochial and diocesan communities to the necessity of devoting special care to education and schools.

21. From the nature of the Catholic School...stems ... the synthesis between culture and Faith. Indeed, knowledge set in the context of Faith becomes wisdom and life vision. The endeavor to weave reason and faith, which has become the heart of individual subjects, makes for unity, articulation and coordination, bringing forth... a Christian vision of the world, of life, of culture and of history.... no separation between time for learning and time for formation, between acquiring notions and growing in wisdom. Various ...subjects present knowledge to be obtained ... values to be acquired and truths to be discovered ...demands an atmosphere characterized by a search for truth ... in the Christian educational project all subjects collaborate...to the formation of mature personalities. Catholic School ...is a school for all...new forms of poverty challenge the Catholic School ... to these new poor the Catholic School turns in a spirit of love.

22. The school cannot be considered separately...but must be related to the world of politics, economy, culture...be an example and stimulus for other educational institutions, in the forefront of the ecclesial communities concern for education.

23. The Catholic School’s public role...It has not come into being as a private initiative, but as an expression of the reality of the Church, having by its nature a public character.... It is not reserved to Catholics only, but it is open to all those who appreciate and share its qualified educational project.... Like state schools, fulfill a public role, for their presence guarantees cultural and educational pluralism, the right of families to see that their children receive the sort of education they wish for them...

24. ...undertakes a cordial and constructive dialogue with states and civil authorities...based on mutual respect...reciprocal recognition. Common service to people We share John Paul 11’s earnest hope... that in all democratic countries “concrete steps finally be taken to implement true

equality for non-state schools, an equality which at the same time respects the latter's educational program.

25. The educating community, taken as a whole, is thus called to further the objective of a school as a place of complete formation through interpersonal relationships.
- ... "prime responsibility for creating this unique Christian school climate rests with the teachers, as individual and as a community." Teaching has an extraordinary moral depth and is one of humanity's most excellent and creative activities."
  - Parents'...primary and natural responsibility for their children's education...The constant aim of the school ...should be contact and dialogue with the pupil's families...
26. ...the work of the school is irreplaceable and the investment of human and material resources in the school becomes a prophetic choice.

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