



CENTER FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Note: The following quotations focus on the topic of *Role and Importance of Teachers* as it is contained in the documents of the Church which consider education. The following conditions and recommendations apply:

- ❖ The purpose of this selection is to give a sample of the topic. It is not intended to replace the reading of the entire document(s) cited.
- ❖ In-text citations are not included in this document. The document can be accessed in its entirety for this purpose. The paragraph numbers give the exact location of the quotation within the pertinent document.
- ❖ In a few instances spelling has been changed to reflect common usage and for the purpose of clarity. (“program” instead of “programme,” for example).
- ❖ The sections included are only examples and are not necessarily the only references on this topic contained in the document(s).

Teachers

Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis), #5
Vatican Council II, 1965.

Beautiful indeed and of great importance is the vocation of all those who aid parents in fulfilling their duties and who, as representatives of the human community, undertake the task of education in schools. This vocation demands special qualities of mind and heart, very careful preparation, and continuing readiness to renew and to adapt.

Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis), #8
Vatican Council II, 1965.

But let teachers recognize that the Catholic school depends upon them almost entirely for the accomplishment of its goals and programs. They should therefore be very carefully prepared so that both in secular and religious knowledge they are equipped with suitable qualifications and also with a pedagogical skill that is in keeping with the findings of the contemporary world. Intimately linked in charity to one another and to their students and endowed with an apostolic spirit, may teachers by their life as much as by their instruction bear witness to Christ, the unique Teacher. Let them work as partners with parents and together with them in every phase of education give due consideration to the difference of sex and the proper ends Divine Providence assigns to each sex in the family and in society. Let them do all they can to stimulate their students to act for themselves and even after graduation to continue to assist them with advice, friendship and by establishing special associations imbued with the true spirit of the Church. The work of these teachers, this sacred synod declares, is in the real sense of the word an apostolate most suited to and necessary for our times and at once a true service offered to society. The Council also reminds Catholic parents of the duty of entrusting their children to Catholic schools wherever and whenever it is possible and of supporting these schools to the best of their ability and of cooperating with them for the education of their children.

Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi), #21
Pope Paul VI, 1975

Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness.

Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi), #21
Pope Paul VI, 1975

Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”

The Catholic School, # 43
Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977.

The achievement of this specific aim of the Catholic school depends not so much on subject matter or methodology as on the people who work there. The extent to which the Christian message is transmitted through education depends to a very great extent on the teachers. The nobility of the task to which teachers are called demands that, in imitation

of Christ, the only Teacher, they reveal the Christian message not only by word but also by every gesture of their behavior. This is what makes the difference between a school whose education is permeated by the Christian spirit and one in which religion is only regarded as an academic subject like any other.

The Catholic School, # 73

Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977.

An equally important role belongs to the teachers in safeguarding and developing the distinctive mission of the Catholic school, particularly with regard to the Christian atmosphere which should characterize its life and teaching.

The Catholic School, # 78

Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977.

By their witness and their behaviour teachers are of the first importance to impart a distinctive character to Catholic schools.

The Catholic School, # 80

Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977.

Catholic teachers who freely accept posts in schools, which have a distinctive character, are obliged to respect that character and give their active support to it under the direction of those responsible.

Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, #16.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982.

The teacher under discussion here is not simply a professional person who systematically transmits a body of knowledge in the context of a school; "teacher" is to be understood as "educator" - one who helps to form human persons. The task of a teacher goes well beyond transmission of knowledge, although that is not excluded. Therefore, if adequate professional preparation is required in order to transmit knowledge, then adequate professional preparation is even more necessary in order to fulfill the role of a genuine teacher. It is an indispensable human formation, and without it, it would be foolish to undertake any educational work.

One specific characteristic of the educational profession assumes its most profound significance in the Catholic educator: the communication of truth. For the Catholic educator, whatever is true is a participation in Him who is the Truth; the communication of truth, therefore, as a professional activity, is thus fundamentally transformed into a unique participation in the prophetic mission of Christ, carried on through one's teaching.

Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, #29.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982.

For the accomplishment of this vast undertaking, many different educational elements must converge; in each of them, the lay Catholic must appear as a witness to faith. An organic, critical, and value-oriented communication of culture (27) clearly includes the communication of truth and knowledge; while doing this, a Catholic teacher should

always be alert for opportunities to initiate the appropriate dialogue between culture and faith - two things which are intimately related - in order to bring the interior synthesis of the student to this deeper level. It is, of course, a synthesis which should already exist in the teacher.

Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, #32.
Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982.

The more completely an educator can give concrete witness to the model of the ideal person that is being presented to the students, the more this ideal will be believed and imitated. For it will then be seen as something reasonable and worthy of being lived, something concrete and realizable. It is in this context that the faith witness of the lay teacher becomes especially important.

Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, #37.
Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982.

The work of a lay educator has an undeniably professional aspect; but it cannot be reduced to professionalism alone. Professionalism is marked by, and raised to, a supernatural Christian vocation.

Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, #40.
Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982.

As a visible manifestation of the faith they profess and the life witness they are supposed to manifest, it is important that lay Catholics who work in a Catholic school participate simply and actively in the liturgical and sacramental life of the school. Students will share in this life more readily when they have concrete examples: when they see the importance that this life has for believers. In today's secularized world, students will see many lay people who call themselves Catholics, but who never take part in liturgy or sacraments. It is very important that they also have the example of lay adults who take such things seriously, who find in them a source and nourishment for Christian living.

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal, #26
Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.

Prime responsibility for creating this unique Christian school climate rests with the teachers, as individuals and as a community. The religious dimension of the school climate is expressed through the celebration of Christian values in Word and Sacrament, in individual behavior, in friendly and harmonious interpersonal relationships, and in a ready availability. Through this daily witness, the students will come to appreciate the uniqueness of the environment to which their youth has been entrusted. If it is not present, then there is little left which can make the school Catholic.

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal, #83.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.

The life of faith is expressed in acts of religion. The teacher will assist students to open their hearts in confidence to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through personal and liturgical prayer.

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal, #96.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.

The fruits of an organic presentation of the faith and of Christian ethics depend in great part on the religion teachers: who they are and what they do. The religion teacher is the key, the vital component, if the educational goals of the school are to be achieved. But the effectiveness of religious instruction is closely tied to the personal witness given by the teacher; this witness is what brings the content of the lessons to life. Teachers of religion, therefore, must be men and women endowed with many gifts, both natural and supernatural, who are also capable of giving witness to these gifts; they must have a thorough cultural, professional, and pedagogical training, and they must be capable of genuine dialogue.

Most of all, students should be able to recognize authentic human qualities in their teachers. They are teachers of the faith; however, like Christ, they must also be teachers of what it means to be human. This includes culture, but it also includes such things as affection, tact, understanding, serenity of spirit, a balanced judgment, patience in listening to others and prudence in the way they respond, and, finally, availability for personal meetings and conversations with the students. A teacher who has a clear vision of the Christian milieu and lives in accord with it will be able to help young people develop a similar vision, and will give them the inspiration they need to put it into practice.

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal, #110.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.

The teachers love their students, and they show this love in the way they interact with them. They take advantage of every opportunity to encourage and strengthen them in those areas which will help to achieve the goals of the educational process. Their words, their witness, their encouragement and help, their advice and friendly correction are all important in achieving these goals, which must always be understood to include academic achievement, moral behavior, and a religious dimension.

When students feel loved, they will love in return. Their questioning, their trust, their critical observations and suggestions for improvement in the classroom and the school milieu will enrich the teachers and also help to facilitate a shared commitment to the formation process.

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal, #111.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.

In a Catholic school, even this is not enough. There is also a continuous vertical interaction, through prayer; this is the fullest and most complete expression of the religious dimension. Each of the students has his or her own life, family and social background, and these are not always happy situations. They feel the unrest of the child or adolescent, which grows more intense as they face the problems and worries of a young person approaching maturity. Teachers will pray for each of them, that the grace present in the Catholic school's milieu may permeate their whole person, enlightening them and helping them to respond adequately to all that is demanded of them in order to live Christian lives. And the students will learn that they must pray for their teachers. As they get older, they will come to appreciate the pain and the difficulties that teaching involves. They will pray that the educational gifts of their teachers may be more effective, that they may be comforted by success in their work, that grace may sustain their dedication and bring them peace in their work.

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal, #112.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.

Thus a relationship is built up which is both human and divine; there is a flow of love, and also of grace. And this will make the Catholic school truly authentic. As the years go by, students will have the joy of seeing themselves nearing maturity; not only physically, but also intellectually and spiritually. When they look back, they will realize that, with their cooperation, the educational objectives of the school have become a reality. And as they look forward, they will feel free and secure, because they will be able to face the new, and now proximate, life commitments.

The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, #14.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997.

All of which demands an atmosphere characterized by the search for truth, in which competent, convinced and coherent educators, teachers of learning and of life, may be a reflection, albeit imperfect but still vivid, of the one Teacher. In this perspective, in the Christian educational project all subjects collaborate, each with its own specific content, to the formation of mature personalities.

The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, #19.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997.

In the Catholic school, "prime responsibility for creating this unique Christian school climate rests with the teachers, as individuals and as a community". Teaching has an extraordinary moral depth and is one of man's most excellent and creative activities, for the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the very spirits of human beings. The personal relations between the teacher and the students, therefore, assume an enormous importance and are not limited simply to giving and taking. Moreover, we

must remember that teachers and educators fulfill a specific Christian vocation and share an equally specific participation in the mission of the Church, to the extent that "it depends chiefly on them whether the Catholic school achieves its purpose."

Consecrated Person and their Mission in Schools: Reflections and Guidelines, #25.
Congregation for Catholic Education, 2003.

The first and fundamental contribution to the educational mission in schools by consecrated persons is the evangelical completeness of their lives. This way of shaping their lives, based on their generous response to God's call, becomes an invitation to all the members of the educational community to make their lives a response to God, according to their various states of life.

Consecrated Person and their Mission in Schools: Reflections and Guidelines, #38.
Congregation for Catholic Education, 2003.

Consecrated persons undertake to be witnesses in schools to the truth about persons and to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. With their lives they confirm that faith enlightens the whole field of education by raising and strengthening human values. Catholic schools especially have a priority: that of "bringing forth within what is learnt in school a Christian vision of the world, of life, of culture and of history.

Consecrated Person and their Mission in Schools: Reflections and Guidelines, #60.
Congregation for Catholic Education, 2003.

The quality of the teachers is fundamental in creating an educational environment that is purposeful and fertile

Consecrated Person and their Mission in Schools: Reflections and Guidelines, #62.
Congregation for Catholic Education, 2003.

With the typical sensitivity of their formation, consecrated persons offer personalized accompanying through attentive listening and dialogue. They are, in fact, convinced that "education is a thing of the heart" and that, consequently, an authentic formative process can only be initiated through a personal relationship.

Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful, #4.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007.

The project of the Catholic school is convincing only if carried out by people who are deeply motivated, because they witness to a living encounter with Christ,

Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful, #13.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007.

The Catholic school, characterized mainly as an educating community, is a school for the *person and of persons*. In fact, it aims at forming the *person in the integral unity of his being*, using the tools of teaching and learning where «criteria of judgement, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life»[16] are formed. Above all, they are involved in the dynamics of interpersonal relations that form and vivify the school community.

Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful, #15.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007.

They are required to be witnesses of Jesus Christ and to demonstrate Christian life as bearing light and meaning for everyone. Just as a consecrated person is called to testify his or her specific vocation to a life of communion in love so as to be in the scholastic community a sign, a memorial and a prophecy of the values of the Gospel so too a lay educator is required to exercise «a specific mission within the Church by living, in faith, a secular vocation in the communitarian structure of the school.

Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful, #34.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007.

By its very nature, the Catholic school requires the presence and involvement of educators that are not only culturally and spiritually formed, but also intentionally directed at developing their community educational commitment in an authentic spirit of ecclesial communion.

Canon 792 §2.

Parents must cooperate closely with the teachers of the schools to which they entrust their children to be educated; moreover, teachers in fulfilling their duty are to collaborate very closely with parents, who are to be heard willingly and for whom associations or meetings are to be established and highly esteemed.

Canon #803 §2.

The instruction and education in a Catholic school must be grounded in the principles of Catholic doctrine; teachers are to be outstanding in correct doctrine and integrity of life.