

Issue Bulletin

Examining Critical Issues in Faithful Catholic Education

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Catholic Education's Call in the Face of 'Cancel Culture'

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In the present moment, much of the popular culture is taken up with concerns about race, gender, and equity. Unfortunately, fruitful dialogue on these important topics has been complicated by radical race and gender ideologies² and a “cancel culture” which has sprung up in their presence. These ideologies are fueled by a comprehensive worldview that functions as a type of religion that separates the enlightened from the ignorant, the woke from the un-woke. Those who can claim the mantle of victimhood are then empowered to make demands of others. It promises freedom for the oppressed and vengeance on the oppressors, taking the form of retribution, humiliation, or ostracization (“cancellation”). The mainstream news, sports and entertainment media, big corporations, educational establishment at all levels, and social media all seem to be on board with judging and destroying anyone (living or dead) who gets categorized as privileged or oppressive. Such is the cancel culture that currently surrounds and even infects Catholic educational communities.

But authentic Catholic education does not cancel culture; it elevates, redeems, and transmits culture. It seeks out and celebrates truth, beauty, and goodness, wherever they are found—and if they are found missing, Catholic education points that out as well. The transcendentals are not bound by culture, time, race, or gender. They do not always flourish equally at all times, among all members of all cultures, but can always be celebrated in God's Creation and in the best of human works.

¹ A short version of this essay was authored by Dan Guernsey, “The Remedy for ‘Canceling’ and Division: Catholic Education,” *The Catholic Thing* (May 19, 2020) at <https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2021/05/19/the-remedy-for-canceling-and-division-catholic-education/>

² A non-exhaustive list includes critical race theory; gender theory; intersectionality; diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); and identity politics.

The Catholic pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness and the Catholic understanding of human dignity and the common good provide a framework for dealing with perennial challenges facing humanity, including the current cultural crises concerning race and gender.

Catholic education serves the common good. Unjust discrimination based on race or gender is an affront to the common good, and therefore Catholic education should respond to these evils with the fullness of a Catholic worldview and morality. Catholic educators should bring the joy of the Gospel and the wisdom of the Church to bear on social justice issues, instead of duplicating or amplifying already loud and divisive secular voices. The charism of Catholic schools and universities is that, “through fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church, they offer a continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge in service to the common good.”³

Because race and gender ideologies and cancel culture function as a type of competing worldview or religion, at times accompanied with a type of puritanical and evangelical furor, Catholic educational institutions should approach elements of other agendas and programs with extreme caution and never cede the social justice arena to divisive worldviews.

The Catholic worldview is based in the dignity of all people and their universal call to holiness and salvation in Christ, in whom we are all are one (Gal. 3:28). In Catholic education, “there is no longer any distinction between Gentiles and Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarians, savages, slaves and free, but Christ is all, Christ is in all” (Col. 3:7). This worldview has no room for unjust discrimination. In Catholic education, all men and women and people of all nationalities, races, and creeds are treated with their inherent dignity as children of God. Catholic education seeks to overcome division, not to create it. The answer to the division caused by the sins of racism and discrimination is the unity brought about by fundamental human fraternity and forgiveness.

An alternative to shutting people down through judgment and division is dialogue in pursuit of truth. Catholic education champions the pursuit of truth above all things, because truth leads us to God, the source and end of all truth, and in whom the cosmos and all humanity throughout all time is unified. Catholics believe that all persons, by virtue of their shared humanity,

are both impelled by their nature and bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth. They are also bound to adhere to the truth once they come to know it and direct their whole lives in accordance with the demands of truth.⁴

Catholic education not only pursues truth intellectually but also seeks to develop in students those dispositions necessary to reflect lived truth in their lives. What this entails is outlined by

³ St. John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae* (1990) 49.

⁴ St. Paul VI, *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965) 2.

the Congregation for Catholic education, which gives examples of desired attitudes to develop in students:

a freedom which includes respect for others; conscientious responsibility; a sincere and constant search for truth; a calm and peaceful critical spirit; a spirit of solidarity with and service toward all other persons; a sensitivity for justice; a special awareness of being called to be positive agents of change in a society that is undergoing continuous transformation. Since Catholic teachers frequently have to exercise their mission within a general atmosphere of secularization and unbelief, it is important that they not be limited to a mentality that is merely experimental and critical; thus, they will be able to bring the students to an awareness of the transcendental, and dispose them to welcome revealed truth.⁵

The vocation of Catholic educators is to articulate and apply the Catholic mind to the common culture, which saturates students and campuses. Competing race and gender ideologies do not lend themselves to the more lofty and inspired ends of Catholic education. There are key things that Catholic educators should and should not do to address hot-button topics like race, gender, and equity. The following are some recommendations to address contemporary cancel culture.

Embrace and present a coherent Catholic worldview.

To protect and advance the mission of Catholic education, it is important to embrace a Catholic worldview throughout the institution, where faith and culture enrich and speak to each other. The Congregation for Catholic Education emphasizes the essential and unique service to the Church stating,

It is, in fact, through the school that she participates in the dialogue of culture with her own positive contribution to the cause of the total formation of man. The absence of the Catholic school would be a great loss for civilization and for the natural and supernatural destiny of man.⁶

Catholic education offers Christ and the Gospel to the world as the ultimate solution to the sufferings and ills of humanity, including areas of social justice. It seeks to adapt the transcendent and eternal Good News to the challenges of the age. In its search for solutions to the shared sufferings of humanity, the Church does not simply echo programs and agendas inspired by others' values but brings to the table her own values of faith, forgiveness, mercy, and justice based on the divine revelation she is called to proclaim to all nations.

⁵ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (1982) 30.

⁶ Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School* (1977) 15.

Situate all discussions about the human person in a clear and convincing Christian anthropology.

This Christian concept of the human person is grievously under attack in the common culture, especially from gender ideologues.⁷ Catholic educational institutions cannot remain passive or silent in the face of such attacks but must give witness to the truth of the human person in season and out of season.

Among these fundamental truths are:⁸

- the material world (and everything that exists) is good, as it is created by God;⁹
- the things of creation are to be received in awe, respect, and gratitude as gifts from God and not manipulated, dominated, or controlled in ways contrary to their natural ends;¹⁰
- everyone, by nature of their creation by God and eternal destiny, has inherent dignity and should be treated with love and respect;¹¹
- the very existence of our bodies is one of the awesome creative gifts of God, and the body is “a temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:19) which we should treat with honor and respect according to God’s original purpose;
- the human person is a “being at once corporeal and spiritual; body and soul;”¹²
- God made us male and female, two distinct but equally dignified and complementary ways of being human;¹³
- the concepts of sex and gender can be distinguished but not disaggregated,¹⁴ and a person “should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity;”¹⁵

⁷ The Congregation for Catholic Education published *‘Male and Female He Made Them’: Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education* (2019) to assist Catholic educational institutions in combating gender ideology.

⁸ This section is excerpted from Dan Guernsey, “Protecting the Human Person: Gender Issues in Catholic School and College Sports” (Nov. 2020) at <https://newmansociety.org/protecting-human-person-gender-issues-catholic-sports/>

⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993) 339.

¹⁰ *Catechism* 307.

¹¹ *Catechism* 27.

¹² *Catechism* 362.

¹³ Genesis 1:27; *Catechism* 2334, 2383.

¹⁴ Pope Francis, *Amoris laetitia* (2016) 56.

¹⁵ *Catechism* 2393.

- there is a natural “language of the body” that helps us understand and express our united physical and spiritual selves;¹⁶ and
- God, through Jesus Christ, the perfect man, fully reveals man to himself.¹⁷

The Christian paradigm exhorts humanity to humbly submit in thanks and praise to the Creator and to live in harmony with His plan, which is the source of our happiness and guarantor of authentic freedom. The human person has a nature that he cannot manipulate and create through his own self-determination.¹⁸ The reigning secular paradigm is that all norms are just social constructs, created by the powerful or by group consensus, and authentic freedom is simply freedom to follow one's own will to the greatest extent possible. Previous moral norms or behaviors which stand in the way of individual desire can be dispensed with or canceled as man-made tools of oppression. This dangerous falsehood must be rejected.

Teach students to properly analyze the morality of the human act with mercy and humility.

Critical race theory misapplies personal sin to groups, irredeemably condemns those it labels as oppressors, condemns those who may happen to look like those oppressors, and makes moral demands of those it believes have privilege resulting from historic oppression. It also attempts to empower itself by manipulating race-based feelings of guilt and self-loathing in those in any way it connects to these claims. It provides these group-based sinners with a chance to feel righteous and pure in relation to their fellows once they acknowledge their guilt. This is far from the teachings of Christ who does not falsely condemn or manipulate. It is however close to the heart of the pharisees whom he criticizes for their condemning legalism and self-righteousness. Catholic schools must ensure their students have a clear understanding of sin and human agency, and Christ's expectations of those whom he has forgiven.

As Catholics we are taught not to judge other people but that actions can and sometimes must be judged (i.e., separating the sin and the sinner). To judge rightly, one must examine the components of the activity including the action itself, the person's awareness of the nature of the act, and their degree of freedom in committing the act. Students should be taught to look at the act, intention, and circumstance to determine the culpability of a behavior within a moral

¹⁶ St. John Paul II, “Language of the Body, the Substratum and Content of the Sacramental Sign of Spousal Communion,” weekly address (January 5, 1983) in *The Redemption of the Body and Sacramentality of Marriage (Theology of the Body)* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005) 268-270.

¹⁷ St. Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (1965) 22 at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (accessed on Oct. 6, 2020).

¹⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, “Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI: Reichstag Building, Berlin” (Sept. 2011) 8. “Man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will. Man is not merely self-creating freedom. Man does not create himself.”

universe that includes the natural law and revelation, especially the Beatitudes, Ten Commandments, and Catholic tradition. If sin is evident, it can only properly be ascribed to individuals, although individual sins can negatively influence others and even entire societies. The Catholic must repent of all sin, forgive all sinners, and seek to mitigate the damage caused by sin. As forgiven sinners who have been welcomed home by Christ, we in humility reach out in our brokenness to invite others home as well. Through God's mercy and forgiveness, escape from sin is always possible. We are not ultimately prisoners of cultural or spiritual forces beyond His reach.

Provide rich literature and history programs that facilitate the handing on of a Catholic worldview.

Critical race theorists and gender ideologues may criticize or attempt to manipulate history and literature in Catholic schools by either demanding that books or units be removed because these materials support the western Christian culture that critical races theorists or gender ideologues identify with oppression and hence must cancel, and/or they may attempt to add works or units for the primary purpose of advancing their agenda of victimhood and oppression.

As with their religion programs, strong Catholic schools will likely not need to overhaul their curricula in order to demonstrate to stakeholders, accreditors, or others that their history and literature programs are robust vehicles for transmitting a Catholic worldview of justice and human dignity. Catholic educators need only make explicit where and how their existing programs use excellent works of literature and history to artfully explore the human condition in its redeemed and unredeemed states. Vatican II notes that,

Literature and the arts are also, in their own way, of great importance to the life of the Church. They strive to make known the proper nature of man, his problems and his experiences in trying to know and perfect both himself and the world. They have much to do with revealing man's place in history and in the world; with illustrating the miseries and joys, the needs and strengths of man and with foreshadowing a better life for him. Thus they are able to elevate human life, expressed in multifold forms according to various times and regions.¹⁹

Great literature provides a forum to explore the depths of the human condition. Unfortunately cruelty, oppression, and injustice are a perennial part of that condition. Educators wishing to explore these and related concepts will find no shortage of them throughout classical literature, where students can enter into a grand conversation through the ages with the best thinkers and most artful works humanity has produced. Shallow but timely works chosen for their temporary

¹⁹ St. Paul VI (1965) 62.

popularity or political correctness should not crowd out substantial and time-tested works that have spoken to generations.

Assigned literature should be of significant artistic weight and strong intellectual merit, rather than simply fodder for current cultural or political agendas. Because the average student will be assigned only a couple of major works each year and sadly many will avoid reading even these, works should be very carefully selected. For K-12 schools, these works should be selected by the institution and not left to the decisions of individual English teachers who may have been formed in secular English departments and/or have limited exposure to works and approaches which best allow for a rich and deep understanding of humanity from a Catholic worldview. Secondary school teachers should review selections required or suggested by outside programs such as the Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate programs, with the Catholic mission in mind.²⁰

History should be studied from a balanced position in light of the joys and struggles of the human condition in its redeemed and unredeemed state. In this way, the study of history can help to identify the ways people and societies change and/or persist over time. Catholic education should interface with historical realities in light of the supernatural destiny of man. The Congregation for Catholic Education exhorts teachers to,

guide the students' work in such a way that they will be able to discover a religious dimension in the world of human history. As a preliminary, they should be encouraged to develop a taste for historical truth, and therefore to realize the need to look critically at texts and curricula which, at times, are imposed by a government or distorted by the ideology of the author... they will see the development of civilizations, and learn about progress... When they are ready to appreciate it, students can be invited to reflect on the fact that this human struggle takes place within the divine history of universal salvation. At this moment, the religious dimension of history begins to shine forth in all its luminous grandeur.²¹

Students need to be able to evaluate the actions of peoples according to the historical and cultural norms of the time, as well as to Catholic moral norms. However, in interfacing with all human situations, students should also be taught compassion and consideration. They should know that the evaluation of a moral act includes the level of development of a person and impact of surrounding conditions, knowledge, and understanding. This is not to excuse behavior but to better understand it. When a Catholic finds a person or culture lacking in moral excellence, they should respond in humility and focus on improving their own behaviors and own society in

²⁰ The Cardinal Newman Society's *Policy Standards on Literature and the Arts in Catholic Education* can be a valuable help here. <https://newmansociety.org/wp-content/uploads/Literature-and-the-Arts-in-Catholic-Education-FINAL-LAYOUT.pdf>

²¹ Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of a Catholic School* (1988) 58-59.

consequence, knowing that one day they and their culture will be judged and may also be blind to evils they are currently surrounded by and may even perpetuate. They do not use other's failures to fuel feelings of self-righteousness and resentment, but as Christian disciples encountering man's fallen nature, they reflect on the nature of sin and temptation and their own radical need for forgiveness and redemption.

The sad truth is that humanity has throughout the ages and cultures (including our own) been vulnerable to a multitude of sins, chief among them pride, greed, lust, envy, sloth, gluttony, and wrath. These sins also manifest themselves in group dynamics and societal injustices.²² Tribal wars, racism, oppression, and scapegoating are the long and sad lot of fallen humanity. However, for the Christian, history has an appointed end: the consummation of all things in Christ. Until that blessed end, human evils will not be fully overcome by power, retribution, politics, and programs, but only by repentance, forgiveness, and love that finds its source, model, and fullness in Christ.

Provide a comprehensive understanding of Catholic social teaching.

Critical race theory and gender ideology proponents are fiercely dedicated to their particular concept of social justice. For them, oppression due to race or gender is the “end all and be all” of all social relationships. This hyper-focus on one element of social justice deforms their perspective and throws off their balance. The Catholic Church has a much broader, comprehensive, and philosophically and theologically grounded understanding of social justice. If Catholic education is confronted by stakeholders or accreditors seeking proof of its commitment to social justice, it need only point out the theology it has been teaching and service it has been rendering all along. Educators can also reference the Church's wealth of thinking in this area, which includes unjust discrimination but also broader issues that also impact human dignity and justice.

The Catholic Church's rich social teaching, as articulated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, centers on several key components:²³

1. Human life is sacred, and the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society.
2. How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy—directly affects human dignity, and because marriage and the family are the central social institutions they must not be undermined.

²² *Catechism* 1869; St. John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (1984) 16.

²³ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching” at <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching> (accessed on July 3, 2021).

3. Every person has a fundamental right to life and to those things required for human decency, with corresponding responsibilities to one another, to their families, and to the larger society.
4. The needs of the poor and vulnerable have precedence.
5. The basic rights of workers must be respected—the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.
6. We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace.
7. We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation.

These seven foundational principles provide rich material to establish common ground and common cause with all those of goodwill seeking social justice. Catholic educators need not adopt the myopic and politically charged programs of secular late-comers who lack the depth and perspective that reason and revelation have long informed a rich Catholic worldview.

In working with outside groups, Catholic administrators should ensure that programs do not violate our more weighty and comprehensive social teaching principles. Two areas of concern given current realities are points two and six. In discussing gender ideology (point two), Catholic educators should ensure that there is no undermining of the Church's understanding that,

The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life, and which of its own very nature is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children, has, between the baptized, been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.²⁴

And in combating injustice (point six), we approach differences and challenges in society as one human family in the pursuit of both justice and peace, not as warring factions seeking to settle scores or seeking to right historical wrongs through unjust means.

Confirm the use of logic and reason to uncover truth, especially when emotion and relativism run hot.

Topics of race and gender are highly charged in our current cultural environment. This same environment is saturated with relativism and tends to privilege personal experience and feeling over objective truth. But without truth to guide us, and without a shared objective reality, we are

²⁴ Holy See, *Code of Canon Law* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983) 1055 §1.

left isolated and only power is left. This is not the Catholic worldview which holds that God is the source of reality, He created the world as good, and He created us to know and care for it and each other using our unified hearts, minds, spirits, and senses.

Working from within this Catholic worldview, Catholic educators need to provide for slow, deep, and thoughtful explorations which critically examine the assumptions, implications, and claims of an argument and test them against logic and against other theories. Students should be taught to identify propaganda and modes of influence that rely primarily on emotion or personal relationships. They should be trained to identify logical fallacies. This will, for example, allow them to identify the invalid circular reasoning in the argument that anyone who rejects critical race theory must do so only because they are racist, even if they are black, an argument that assumes the premise and therefore is non-falsifiable. It will also protect them from falling for “ad hominem” arguments that attack the speaker (perhaps based on appearance or social standing) rather than the merit of the argument being presented. In a healthy academic environment, charity and humility must trump power, reason must check emotion, and a love of truth will impel us to reject lies and ensure the mind is in accord with reality.

Encourage unity and create community.

Critical race theory is premised on segregating people into groups and then assigning privilege, culpability, and status based on group membership. This inevitably pits individuals and groups against each other and is inimical to our human dignity and to our status as children of God the Father. Catholic schools have long understood that community is central to their mission, thus any attack against community and union is an attack on the school's mission. Catholic educators seeking to demonstrate their appreciation for justice, fraternity, and human dignity need only highlight what they have been doing all along. They need not bring on new secular programs or apologize. The Congregation for Catholic education encourages them in their foundational mission:

to educate for communion, which, as a gift that comes from above, animates the project of formation for living together in harmony and being welcoming. Not only does it cultivate in the students the cultural values that derive from the Christian vision of reality, but it also involves each one of them in the life of the community, where values are mediated by authentic interpersonal relationships among the various members that form it, and by the individual and community acceptance of them. In this way, the life of communion of the educational community assumes the value of an educational principle,

of a paradigm that directs its formational action as a service for the achievement of a culture of communion.²⁵

To demonstrate their commitment to communion and welcoming of all, Catholic educators do not need to adopt political activities or symbols of hip or transgressive social causes popular with the world. Rather they need to highlight and continue their ongoing efforts to draw closer to each other through discussion, prayer, celebration, meal-sharing, and even play, which have long been hallmarks of Catholic education. All students thrive when told they are loved and when they experience love from their teachers. This, in turn, elevates the Catholic educational community. The Congregation for Catholic Education expresses it this way:

The human person experiences his humanity to the extent that he is able to participate in the humanity of the other, the bearer of a unique and unrepeatably plan. This is a plan that can only be carried out within the context of the relation and dialogue with the *you* in a dimension of reciprocity and opening to God. This kind of reciprocity is at the basis of the gift of self and of *closeness* as an opening in solidarity with every other person. This closeness has its truest root in the mystery of Christ, the Word Incarnate, who wished to become close to man.²⁶

Catholic educators should do nothing to compound racial tension or promote tribalism and should avoid any “if you’re not for us you’re against us” type of thinking.

Facilitate authentic dialogue.

“Cancel culture” has created an environment of fear, where people may be afraid to speak or write what they truly feel or are struggling to better understand. But speaking and writing are fundamental parts of the learning process. It is through clumsy and repeated attempts that one develops one’s understanding of a thing and hones the skill to express that understanding more artfully and completely. Voicing sincere but inchoate or even errant thoughts to others allows one’s thoughts to be corrected, developed, and brought into accord with the truth. People should not be made afraid to make a statement thinking they will be “canceled” or personally attacked with no recourse to social etiquette and the Christian principle of charity first. We are works in progress and need to communicate respectfully and openly with others, as we work our way to truth.

Everyone in Catholic education should be treated with dignity, and allowing them to share their voice and experience in pursuit of truth and in pursuit of the good is important. The Vatican

²⁵ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission Between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful* (2007) 39 §5.

²⁶ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in Schools* (2002) 36.

provides significant guidance on how to establish a respectful culture of dialogue, no matter the setting:

The world, in all its diversity, is eager to be guided towards the great values of mankind, truth, good, and beauty; now more than ever. This is the approach Catholic schools should have towards young people, through dialogue, in order to present them with a view regarding the Other and others that is open, peaceful, and enticing.²⁷

Dialogue is not for its own sake but a means to pursue truth and a means for promoting unity,

Within intercultural education, this dialogue aims “to eliminate tensions and conflicts, and potential confrontations by a better understanding among the various religious cultures of any given region. It may contribute to purifying cultures from any dehumanizing elements, and thus be an agent of transformation. It can also help to uphold certain traditional cultural values which are under threat from modernity and the leveling down which indiscriminate internationalization may bring with it.”²⁸

Pope Francis affirmed,

Dialogue is very important for our own maturity, because in confronting another person, confronting other cultures, and also confronting other religions in the right way, we grow; we develop and mature... This dialogue is what created peace.²⁹

The Congregation for Catholic Education guides us that:

Dialogue is first and foremost, an educational process where the search for a peaceful and enriching coexistence is rooted in the broader concept of the human being—in his or her psychological, cultural and spiritual aspects—free from any form of egocentrism and ethnocentrism, but rather in accordance with a notion of integral and transcendent development both of the person and of society.³⁰

The path of dialogue becomes possible and fruitful when based on the awareness of each individual's dignity and of the unity of all people in a common humanity, with the aim of sharing and building up together a common destiny.³¹

²⁷ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion. Instrumentum laboris* (2014) III.1.c.

²⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love* (Vatican City, 2013) 20.

²⁹ Pope Francis, *Speech to Students and Teachers of the Seibu Gakuen Bunry Junior High School of Saitama, Tokyo* (21 August 2013).

³⁰ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating to Fraternal Humanism: Building a “Civilization of Love” 50 Years After Populorum Progressio* (2017) 15.

³¹ Congregation for Catholic Education (2013) 21.

These twin concepts of sharing a common humanity and a common destiny are based on a Christian concept of the human person. These realities are also the bedrock upon which human freedom can be preserved and defended from groupthink, political violence, and the tyranny of individuals or mobs. They are especially important when ideologues might seek to destroy the freedom or rights of others in an attempt to dispense justice or distribute power.

Use Catholic materials when available.

Critical race theory and gender ideology are popular and well-funded causes célèbre in the common culture. Private and government funding is being showered upon these movements, providing for the development of all sorts of slick and ubiquitous educational resources and guides. Catholic education should steer well clear of them.

As referenced earlier, Catholic educators have long used tools to promote human dignity and justice through their religion and literature curricula. In addition, those looking for specific resources on racism can benefit from the USCCB's "Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love, a Pastoral Letter Against Racism."³² This resource outlines the U.S. bishops' perspectives on racism by defining and explaining the history of racism in the United States and then offering theological guidance as well as practical steps for action. Pastors, teachers, and catechists are called to teach "the entire Christian doctrine on this subject" and to explain the,

true teaching from Scripture and Tradition about the origin of all people in God, their final common destiny and the Kingdom of God, the value of the precept of fraternal love, and the total incompatibility between racist exclusivism and the universal calling of all to the same salvation in Jesus Christ.³³

The document asks Catholics to individually and corporately acknowledge the evil of racism, seek forgiveness, and engage in dialogue to make significant changes to end racism. All of this, the document says, must begin with a conversion of heart.³⁴

The bishops also created a study guide for this document, which lists additional resources, lessons, and questions for reflection.³⁵ Concepts taught include the dignity of the human person, how the Beatitudes show us true happiness, the effects of unjust racism and bias within the body of Christ, institutional racism, and Catholic social teaching. The document also includes examples of individuals who have fought against racism.

³² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love, a Pastoral Letter Against Racism" (2018) at <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/upload/open-wide-our-hearts.pdf> (accessed on July 3, 2021).

³³ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2018) 26.

³⁴ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2018) 29-30.

³⁵ See https://www.usccb.org/resources/study-guide-open-hearts-2019-09_0.pdf and <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/upload/resource-hs-structures-of-sin.pdf>

The U.S. bishops also joined with other religious leaders to openly denounce the ideology of gender theory³⁶ and have provided teaching resources and guidance on gender theory and gender ideology,³⁷ as has the Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome.³⁸

Maximize instruction under your existing Catholic curriculum before considering secular programs.

Before introducing outside programs, ensure that current curricular programming is maximized in its instruction on the dignity of the human person and our relationship to God and to each other. Catholic education does not need to add more programs to help students treat others with charity and justice—that has long been part of our culture. If external forces such as pressure groups, alumni, or accreditors are pushing a Catholic school to prove its commitment to contemporary justice issues, it should seek first to highlight and make more explicit the timeless commitment to charity and justice it has always had. Catholic educators do not need to “catch up” or mimic shallow, political, emotional, Marxist, or secular programs that promote a non-Catholic worldview.

Within the Catholic tradition exists a solid framework for addressing society's many ills. Amplify the elements of existing religion programs that speak to the dignity of man as made in the image of the Triune God and the pinnacle of God's creation. Emphasize the teaching in existing religion programs that man is destined to live in communion with God and each other but that sin has entered the world. After original sin, this original unity for all mankind could only then come to fruition with the coming of His son, Jesus Christ:

The origins of man are to be found in Christ: for he is created “through him and in him” (Col 1:16)... The Father destined us to be his sons and daughters, and “to be conformed to the image of his Son, who is the firstborn of many brothers” (Rom. 8:29)... In him [Jesus] we find the total receptivity to the Father which should characterize our own existence, the openness to the other in an attitude of service which should characterize our relations with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and the mercy and love for others which Christ, as the image of the Father, displays for us.³⁹

³⁶ Joint Letter, “Created Male and Female: An Open Letter from Religious Leaders” (Dec 2017) at <https://www.usccb.org/committees/promotion-defense-marriage/created-male-and-female> (accessed on July 3, 2021).

³⁷ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “‘Gender theory’/‘Gender ideology’—Select Teaching Resources” (2019) at <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/promotion-and-defense-of-marriage/upload/Gender-Ideology-Select-Teaching-Resources.pdf> (accessed on July 3, 2021).

³⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education (2019).

³⁹ International Theological Commission, *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God* (2004) 53 at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_commun-stewardship_en.html (accessed on July 3, 2021).

A goal of Catholic education is to have students ultimately join the communion of saints in heaven. If our religion programs are doing all they are called to do, then the message of “on earth as it is in Heaven” should ring loud and clear. And if our existing religion programs are taught well, then we only need to crescendo those concepts that clarify and expel discordant contemporary issues. If we find our religion programs deficit in these foundational facts, then a different program or Catholic supplements should be added.⁴⁰

Beware of secular programs, speakers, and materials that conflict with a Catholic worldview and morality.

Catholic educators should not use secular programs, speakers, or materials⁴¹ if they:

- advance positions contrary to Church teaching, cause scandal, or may be a source of confusion about Catholic teaching;
- promote or encourage atheism, agnosticism, scientific materialism, or a false ideology about the human person;
- promote or encourage relativism or deny the existence of transcendent, objective truth which is knowable by reason and revelation;
- obstruct the goal of uniting faith and reason or synthesizing faith with life and culture;
- obstruct the development of a Catholic worldview or a Catholic understanding of the human person;
- suggest that man is capable to solve all his problems or attain heaven through natural virtues and effort without God's grace, mercy, and salvation;
- encourage political and social activism that is not supported by Catholic principles or social teaching, including subsidiarity, the universal destination of humanity in God, or suggests the permissibility to do evil or committing an injustice so that a perceived good may result; or
- are promoted or written by individuals or groups who might bring scandal to the Catholic institution through formal or material cooperation.

⁴⁰ See Ruah Woods Press and the Standards for Christian Anthropology for assistance in this area: <https://www.ruahwoods.org/services/> and <https://newmansociety.org/educator-resources/resources/academics/christian-anthropology-standards/>.

⁴¹ Adapted from Cardinal Newman checklist for working with secular programs. See <https://newmansociety.org/secular-academic-materials-and-programs-in-catholic-education/> and <https://newmansociety.org/procedure-and-checklist-for-the-evaluation-and-use-of-secular-materials-and-programs-in-catholic-education/>

In order to fulfill the mission of education, all secular programs, no matter how effective, will need to be richly supplemented with materials that present a Catholic worldview and understanding of the subject at hand.

Carefully define terms using definitions from within the classical and Catholic traditions.

The radical nature of critical race theory and gender ideology requires proponents to redefine common terms and create new ones in attempting to forward their new worldviews. For them, words have no straightforward correspondence to things of the real world. They are self-referential and linked to issues of oppression, often targeting a difference between how the words are received by someone from a particular race or sex.

It is helpful to define terms in seeking to clarify difficult situations or ideas. This should be done openly. Often terms can be coopted or changed in ways that confuse or lead to false conclusions. Other terms can become politically charged in positive or negative ways and thus sway opinion without getting closer to the truth of things. It is especially important to draw out dangers and misunderstandings about newly appropriated or newly understood terms in these debates.

The following definitions are suggested to assist in developing dialogue and clarifying a Catholic worldview on these topics. When possible, Catholic educators should stick with terms as defined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* or other Church documents.

- **body/soul unity:** “The human person, created in the image of God, is a being at once corporeal and spiritual... it is a human body precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul... the unity is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the ‘form’ of the body: i.e., it is because of its spiritual soul that the body made of matter becomes a living human body; spirit and matter, man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature.”⁴²
- **calumny:** “remarks contrary to the truth [by which one] harms the reputation of others and gives occasion for false judgments concerning them.”⁴³ “Detraction and calumny destroy the reputation and honor of one’s neighbor. [they] offend against the virtues of justice and charity.”⁴⁴
- **charity:** “the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.”⁴⁵

⁴² *Catechism* 365.

⁴³ *Catechism* 2477.

⁴⁴ *Catechism* 2479.

⁴⁵ *Catechism* 1822.

- **Christian anthropology:** “the branch of theological study that investigates the origin, nature, and destiny of humans and of the universe in which they live... Christian anthropology offers perspectives on the constitutive elements and experiences of human personhood—bodiliness and spirit, freedom and limitation, solitude and companionship, work and play, suffering and death, and, in specifically theological terms, sin and grace.”⁴⁶
- **common good:** “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, whether as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily. The common good concerns the life of all.”⁴⁷ It consists of three essential elements: respect for the person, the social well-being and development of the group itself, and peace—the stability and security of a just order.
- **dignity of the person:** “The dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God; it is fulfilled in his vocation to divine beatitude. ... The human person participates in the light and power of the divine Spirit. By his reason, he is capable of understanding the order of things established by the Creator. By free will, he is capable of directing himself toward his true good. He finds his perfection ‘in seeking and loving what is true and good.’”⁴⁸ “The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching.”⁴⁹
- **discrimination:** commonly used in a sociological sense, such as an unequal treatment between groups based upon prejudice or favoritism. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as “treating one or more members of a specified group unfairly as compared with other people.”⁵⁰ The Church teaches that “Every form of social or cultural discrimination in fundamental personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social conditions, language, or religion must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God’s design.”⁵¹

However, in a more basic sense, discrimination comes from the Latin root “discriminat,” to “distinguish between.” In this comparative sense, discrimination includes a preference

⁴⁶ Encyclopedia.com, “Christian anthropology” at <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/christian-anthropology> (accessed on May 24, 2021).

⁴⁷ *Catechism* 1905-1909.

⁴⁸ *Catechism* 1700, 1704.

⁴⁹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Life and Dignity of the Human Person” at <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/life-and-dignity-of-the-human-person> (accessed on July 3, 2021)

⁵⁰ Oxford English Dictionary, “Discrimination” at <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095721450> (accessed on June 16, 2021).

⁵¹ *Catechism* 1935.

among two or more things. When applied in this broad sense, one can distinguish or “discriminate” among the qualities, attributes, or morality of things. The Church teaches that qualities, attributes, and “talents” are given to different people in different portions as part of God’s design.⁵² Distinguishing people’s ages, physical abilities, and intellectual or moral aptitudes and how these bear fruit encourages interdependence and opportunities for generosity and kindness, which fosters the enrichment of culture.⁵³

- **diversity:** according to the Church is an array of different ethnicities, cultures and peoples.⁵⁴ “Diversity is a beautiful thing when it can constantly enter into a process of reconciliation and seal a sort of cultural covenant resulting in a ‘reconciled diversity’. As the bishops of the Congo have put it: ‘Our ethnic diversity is our wealth...It is only in unity, through conversion of hearts and reconciliation, that we will be able to help our country to develop on all levels.’”⁵⁵
- **empathy:** “a function of the virtue of charity by which a person enters into another’s feelings, needs, and sufferings.”⁵⁶
- **equality:** “The equality of men rests essentially on their dignity as persons and the rights that flow from it...”⁵⁷ “Created in the image of the one God and equally endowed with rational souls, all men have the same nature and the same origin. Redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, all are called to participate in the same divine beatitude: all therefore enjoy an equal dignity.”⁵⁸
- **equity:** “The wise application of positive law to particular circumstances, with due consideration for natural or revealed justice and for the spirit and not merely the letter of the law. Too strict an application of a given law, whether civil or ecclesiastical, may turn out to be inhuman although in perfect accord with what the law prescribes.”⁵⁹
- **freedom:** “Freedom is the power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one’s own responsibility. By free will one shapes one’s own life. ...Freedom makes man responsible for his acts to the extent that they are voluntary. ...Imputability and responsibility for an action can be diminished or

⁵² *Catechism* 1936-1937.

⁵³ *Catechism* 1937.

⁵⁴ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) 116, 230.

⁵⁵ Pope Francis (2013) 230.

⁵⁶ Catholic Dictionary, “Empathy” at

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/dictionary/index.cfm?id=33313> (accessed on July 3, 2021).

⁵⁷ *Catechism* 1935.

⁵⁸ *Catechism* 1934.

⁵⁹ Catholic Dictionary, “Equity” at <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/dictionary/index.cfm?id=33362> (accessed on July 3, 2021).

even nullified by ignorance, inadvertence, duress, fear, habit, inordinate attachments, and other psychological or social factors.”⁶⁰

- **inclusion:** Generically, “the fact of including someone or something; the fact of being included.”⁶¹ In Catholic teaching, inclusion involves the concepts of community, unity, and solidarity. For instance, “At all times and in every race God has given welcome to whosoever fears Him and does what is right.”⁶² “The Lord asks us to love as He does, even our enemies, to make ourselves the neighbor of those farthest away, and to love children and the poor as Christ himself.”⁶³
- **justice:** “the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the ‘virtue of religion.’ Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good. The just man, often mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, is distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct toward his neighbor. ‘You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.’”⁶⁴
- **racism:** “arises when—either consciously or unconsciously—a person holds that his or her own race or ethnicity is superior, and therefore judges persons of other races or ethnicities as inferior and unworthy of equal regard. When this conviction or attitude leads individuals or groups to exclude, ridicule, mistreat, or unjustly discriminate against persons based on their race or ethnicity, it is sinful. Racist acts are sinful because they violate justice. They reveal a failure to acknowledge the human dignity of the persons offended, to recognize them as the neighbors Christ calls us to love (Mt 22:39).”⁶⁵
- **rash judgment:** “assumes as true, without sufficient foundation, the moral fault of a neighbor... To avoid rash judgment, everyone should be careful to interpret insofar as possible his neighbor’s thoughts, words, and deeds in a favorable way.”⁶⁶
- **retribution:** “Although both the just reward or punishment due to good or sinful actions can be termed retribution, ordinary usage normally reserves this word for punishment. In the Christian understanding, the suffering is in part due to sin itself; in this sense,

⁶⁰ *Catechism* 1731, 1734-1735

⁶¹ Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, “inclusion” at https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/inclusion#:~:text=inclusion-,noun,the%20team%20is%20in%20doubt (accessed on June 18, 2021).

⁶² St. Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium* (1964) 9.

⁶³ *Catechism* 1825.

⁶⁴ *Catechism* 1807.

⁶⁵ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2018) 3.

⁶⁶ *Catechism* 2477-2478.

punishment is an intrinsic consequence of sin.”⁶⁷ “Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven—through a purification or immediately—or immediate and everlasting damnation.”⁶⁸

- **social justice:** “Society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation. Social justice is linked to the common good and the exercise of authority.”⁶⁹
- **solidarity:** “The principle of solidarity, also articulated in terms of ‘friendship’ or ‘social charity,’ is a direct demand of human and Christian brotherhood. ... The virtue of solidarity goes beyond material goods. In spreading the spiritual goods of the faith, the Church has promoted, and often opened new paths for, the development of temporal goods as well. And so throughout the centuries has the Lord’s saying been verified: ‘Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well’”⁷⁰ “[Solidarity] is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.”⁷¹
- **systemic racism:** unjust discrimination of people based on race or ethnicity that is rooted in the “workings of society itself,”⁷² which “perpetuate and preserve... inequality—economic and social.”⁷³

⁶⁷ Our Sunday Visitor, *Catholic Encyclopedia* (Huntington, In.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1991) 828. See also discussion on “retribution” as punishment for its own sake in United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Responsibility, Rehabilitation and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice” (2000) at <https://www.usccb.org/resources/responsibility-rehabilitation-and-restoration-catholic-perspective-crime-and-criminal> (accessed on May 24, 2021). See punishment as a demand of justice, whereby the criminal is compelled to render his proper due in satisfaction of the order violated by his actions in Joseph Falvey, Jr., “Crime and Punishment: A Catholic Perspective,” *The Catholic Lawyer*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2004) 156 at <https://scholarship.law.stjohns.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2508&context=tcl> (accessed on May 24, 2021). “In their 1980 statement on capital punishment, the USCCB seemed to have a better understanding of this teaching than they do in *Responsibility, Rehabilitation and Restoration*. The USCCB correctly defined retribution as ‘the restoration of the order of justice which has been violated by the action of the criminal. (*Responsibility, Rehabilitation and Restoration*, *Supra.* note 41). Moreover, it stated, ‘the need for retribution does indeed justify punishment’ (p. 157).”

⁶⁸ *Catechism* 1022.

⁶⁹ *Catechism* 1928.

⁷⁰ *Catechism* 1939, 1942.

⁷¹ St. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* (1987) 38.

⁷² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2018).

⁷³ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2018).

- **tolerance:** “patient forbearance in the presence of an evil [or something else that one disapproves of,] which one is unable or unwilling to prevent.” This is distinguished from other forms of toleration: “By theoretical dogmatic tolerance is meant the tolerating of error as such, in so far as it is an error... Such a tolerance can only be the outcome of an attitude which is indifferent to the right of truth, and which places truth and error on the same level. ...Practical civic tolerance consists in the personal esteem and love which we are bound to show towards the erring person, even though we condemn or combat his error. ...Public political tolerance is not a duty of the citizens but is an affair of the State and of legislation. Its essence consists in the fact that the State grants legal tolerance” to a group.⁷⁴
- **unity:** “the attribute of a thing whereby it is undivided in itself and yet distinct from other things.”⁷⁵ “The Church is one because of her source [God as Trinity]... her founder [Jesus Christ]... her ‘soul’ [the Holy Spirit]. Unity is of the essence of the Church... a multiplicity and diversity of people. ...Above all, charity ‘binds everything together in perfect harmony.’ But the unity of the pilgrim Church is also assured by visible bonds of communion.”⁷⁶

In light of the above concerns, in Catholic education it is best to avoid...

- Bringing in outside consultants for faculty or student training on race, gender, equity, or justice issues who do not fully embrace and understand the Catholic mission or Catholic morality.
- Promoting programs or materials that result in division, blame one particular group or culture for the ills of humanity, seek vengeance, stifle free speech or religious freedom, or encourage groupthink or mob behavior.
- Being pressured to institute “diversity, equity, and inclusion” (D.E.I.) programs by alumni, parents, or other forces especially when racial harmony is already significantly present within the institution.
- Promoting programs that encourage self-loathing, feelings of superiority, rash judgment, vengeance, hostility, self-righteousness, bitterness, or bullying. These are not of Jesus, who is “both model and means” for the students to imitate and in whom they will find “the inexhaustible source of personal and communal perfection.”⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Catholic Encyclopedia, “Religious Tolerance” at <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14763a.htm> (accessed on April 20, 2021).

⁷⁵ Our Sunday Visitor (1991) 951.

⁷⁶ *Catechism* 813-814.

⁷⁷ Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1982) 18

- Promoting within the institution or by use of faculty members, symbols, flags, stickers, bumper stickers, and so forth that advertise allegiance to a cause that does not clearly and fully embrace Catholic teaching. Catholic educators require nuance and the ability to help students navigate complex realities that symbols or stickers with their mixed messages may cause. Take the time to explore deep concerns as a whole and not use the shortcut of compromised symbols.
- Promoting the term or concept of “ally.” This is the language of division. If there are allies, there are enemies. Also, ally tends to be a political term of alliance and power calculations, rather than a term of broad unity in shared human dignity. The desire to be classed as an ally may pressure one into acceptance of divisive behaviors and acts, when human solidarity is the actual target. It is best to avoid any “with us or against us” rhetoric, since a Christian understanding of brother, sister, and neighbor creates the space to love and care for another without condoning all their activities.
- Replacing academics with activism or allowing the curriculum to be driven by the current news cycle. Sometimes called “action civics,” current social studies programs can run the risk of replacing thought and analysis with emotion and politics. Catholic schools should focus on teaching students critical thinking and careful analysis of complex social phenomena. Students should be taught to see all sides of an issue, understand their own possible bias, and even to argue for positions they disagree with to ensure they have fully engaged with a topic, before seeking to impose their will (or even worse a manipulative adult’s indoctrination of them) on the body politic. Healthy democracies need to ensure there is a lot of room for disagreement and freedom of movement and expression. Mature political engagement takes time, personal moral development, and a keen understanding of liberty, freedom, and responsibility from a Christian worldview. There is plenty here to keep teachers and students busy without requiring school-sponsored political activism.

Students should not be forced into specific political activities or protests or formal or informal lobbying to attempt to effect immediate social change, especially if it is in the context of chasing a grade. Students should not be used by adults or schools as weapons in a particular cause of the day. They should not be used as mouthpieces for concepts or phrases developed and fed to them by others for social outcomes, even if well-intended. Because students are extremely impressionable and a “captive group,” subject to the control of both teachers and peers, they should not be required to engage in classroom-based political activism through a desire to please teachers for social or academic gain.

- Conducting activities that require students to explore their race, gender, sexual orientation, or disabilities and then determine if privilege or oppression is attached to those identities. Compelling students to identify themselves in these categories and

attaching moral values or rank to these categories is indicative of the divisive practices at the heart of critical race theory and gender ideology and opposed to the integral nature of humanity, which is at the heart of a Christian anthropology. We interface with complete persons with inherent worth and deep mystery. Shallow categorizations can trap and limit them and inflict such limitations on others.

- Engaging in simulation activities which purport to have the privileged “feel what it’s like” to be discriminated against or oppressed. Such activities can come across as artificial, manipulative, and misguided and result in emotions, arguments, complaints, and controversies which may distract from the real human suffering trying to be explored and understood. This also respects that we cannot fully know or claim to effectively recreate in ourselves another’s pain. Music, art, poetry, literature, movies, and personal testimonies are better suited to driving connection, which is the surest way to human understanding, forgiveness, and flourishing. Such human expression, rather than contrived simulations, better promotes the skill of empathy, which is the ability to enter into another’s suffering without directly experiencing it oneself and connecting to similar feelings already within one’s realm of experience. It allows suffering to fulfill its unifying capacity.

Conclusion

Catholic education makes saints and citizens. It does this by forming an evangelical educational community consecrated to truth. Through integral formation, it seeks to instill a Catholic worldview so that students might come to know, understand, and appreciate the truth, beauty, and goodness of God’s creation.

A Catholic worldview does not allow for ideologies that hold one race or sex as inherently superior to another or allow one race or sex to treat another adversely or with disrespect. A Catholic worldview does not allow one to hold that race or sex determines moral character or inherently makes one a racist, sexist, or oppressor. It rejects the notion that an individual, by virtue of his or her race or sex, bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race or sex or that they should be made to feel guilty or distressed on account of their race or sex. It holds that one’s value is not based on how one looks and that the way one looks cannot be used to determine one’s personal convictions, morality, and social and political values or to predict their behavior.

It holds that, far from being oppressive, virtues such as diligence and patriotism are to be encouraged for the human flourishing of all. It promotes justice that is free from vengeance, unity that is free from estrangement, community that is free from tribalism. A Catholic worldview seeks to bring structure and meaning to experience, rather than deconstructing cultures and stripping experience of its meaning. It seeks to enchant rather than disenchant our

relationships with each other and with God's creation. It seeks to instill in us generosity rather than resentment, and reason rather than wrath. It encourages self-donation rather than self-empowerment. It encourages humility rather than pride.

Because of the radical disconnect between the Catholic worldview and critical race ideology and gender ideology, Catholic schools must remain vigilant and faithful whenever these ideologies appear in its midst.

Catholic educational communities have a rich heritage upon which to draw when it comes to confronting contemporary heresies and erroneous ideologies. It is this Christian heritage that can be found throughout the cultures of the world and through the last two thousand years, that educators should first turn to when seeking means and methods of integrally forming our students in truth, beauty, and goodness. Catholic educators concerned about responding to pressures to fight racism and unjust discrimination need not panic. They need only take the time to make explicit what they do every day and continually strengthen their practice of Catholic education.

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