

The Value of a Catholic School in Light of the Diminishing Family

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Some families sacrifice much in order to provide their children a Catholic education. The main reason for this is quite simple: they want their sons and daughters to learn and live the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In addition, many people who choose Catholic over public schools do so because they desire educators who are committed to the mission of the Church and who encourage their children to take responsibility for themselves, respect others, and learn Catholic values and teachings.

We often think of the church as the place where we come together to worship God. We must not forget, however, what we sometimes refer to as the “domestic church.” Children begin to learn the basic practices of their faith, recite their prayers, and acquire a Christian morality not by sitting in the pews, but from their parents’ efforts and example and even by interacting at home with their siblings.

Nevertheless, it remains obvious that over the past two generations our society has witnessed changes in and challenges to the traditional family structure. For example, both father and mother usually have careers and work. Furthermore, a large number of families have only a single parent to provide for and raise the children. The average number of children in each family has also diminished.

In light of these situations and other—sometimes very complex ones—the role of a Catholic school can help a great deal. Catholic elementary, middle, and high schools provide a place where not only one can receive teaching in language arts, social studies, and mathematics, but also where pupils attend Mass, read the Bible, and pray together. Dedicated teachers, lay men and women for the most part, can serve as Christian role models for children. They can answer questions about the faith, so that young people learn *why* as a Church we believe as we do, as well as the content of *what* we believe. They can also show their students *how* to put those beliefs into practice.

At Catholic schools, faith constitutes not just a part of one’s education, but takes in the whole range of subjects. This is so because faith sheds light on and evaluates every aspect of human experience. Catholic education does not treat faith as one or another dimension of a person’s life; it considers faith the one dimension that gives all the rest meaning. In other words, Catholic schools provide a culture in which the next generation can grow up and mature.

Our Catholic schools propose a culture of life in the face of the current culture of death. They offer a vision of strong values to children and young people. They also provide a safe environment. Because of the way the family is developing in our society, mothers and fathers need as much assistance to provide their sons and daughters with the kind of education their children deserve. Based on these considerations, one can only conclude that the value of a Catholic education in light of the diminishing family is inestimable.