



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

Diocese of Salt Lake City

Catholic Schools - A Mission of the Church

In the spring and summer of 2005, two new publications from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) that support and give direction to the Catholic schools were published.

The first publication is the National Directory for Catechesis. This book is a resource for all who participate in catechetical ministry. Two quotes that are especially relevant to Catholic school parents state:

The Catholic school forms part of the saving mission of the Church, especially For education in the faith. It is not simply an institution which offers academic instruction of high quality, but, even more important, is an effective vehicle of total Christian formation. (p. 230).

Parents are the most influential agents of catechesis for their children. They have a unique responsibility for the education of their children; they are the first educators, or catechists. They catechize primarily by the witness of their Christian lives and by their love for the faith. One way that parents communicate Christian values and attitudes to their children is by loving each other within the context of a Christian marriage and their love for Christ and his Church. (p. 234)

The second document is a statement from the USCCB entitled “Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary schools in the Third Millennium.” The entire document is important. Some highlights of this document are:

Young people are a valued treasure and the future leaders of our Church. It is the responsibility of the entire Catholic community – bishops, priests, deacons, religious, and laity – to continue to strive towards the goal of making our Catholic elementary and secondary schools **available, accessible, and affordable** to all Catholic parents and their children, including those who are poor and middle class. ... These Catholic schools afford the fullest and best opportunity to realize the fourfold purpose of Christian education, namely to provide an atmosphere in which the Gospel message is proclaimed, community in Christ is experienced, service to our sisters and brothers is the norm, and thanksgiving and worship of our God is cultivated. (p. 1)

Young people of the third millennium must be a source of energy and leadership in our Church and our nation. Therefore, we must provide young people with an academically rigorous and doctrinally sound program of education and faith

formation designed to strengthen their union with Christ and his Church. Catholic schools collaborate with parents and guardians in raising and forming their children as families struggle with the changing and challenging cultural and moral contexts in which they find themselves. Catholic schools provide young people with sound Church teaching through a broad-based curriculum, where faith and culture are intertwined in all areas of a school's life. ... This unique Catholic identity makes our Catholic elementary and secondary schools "schools for the human person" and allows them to fill a critical role in the future life of our Church, our country, and our world. (p. 3)

Our vision is clear; our Catholic schools are a vital part of the teaching mission of the Church. The challenges ahead are many, but our spirit and will to succeed are strong. We, the Catholic bishops of the United States, in cooperation with the total Catholic community, are committed to overcoming these challenges. Adversity often brings out the best in men and women. We must respond to challenging times with faith, vision, and the will to succeed because the Catholic school's mission is vital to the future of our young people, our nation, and most especially our Church. (p. 16)

The Diocesan School Board and the administrators of our schools are committed to making these documents come alive in the Catholic schools of Utah. We are especially committed to making Catholic schools "available, accessible, and affordable to all Catholic parents and their children, including those who are poor and middle class."

As we continue to implement "Cost-Based tuition / Need-Based Tuition Assistance" we will focus our attention on how we can fund tuition assistance. When tuition costs increase, so does the need for financial aid. We are aware of this need and ask everyone in the Catholic community to support our schools' efforts to provide tuition assistance to families who cannot afford the full cost of tuition. Now more than ever, we need to increase our endowments, secure grants and donations, and increase our fundraising so that we are able to offer our families the financial assistance they need.

Diocesan leadership has stated that our schools must be available for all parents, not just the wealthy. We must maintain a diversity of cultures and economic ability in the Catholic schools. If our schools are not accessible to all, we become private schools. We are NOT private schools; we are CATHOLIC schools that celebrate and encourage diversity in our student population.

Working together within the Catholic community, we are able to provide the means necessary to maintain the Catholic schools as a viable choice for parents. Working creatively, we will be able to find the means to support the Catholic schools so they will be available, accessible, and affordable to all who wish an education within the context of a solid faith formation.