

Common Threads

Archbishop Henry J. Mansell's Pastoral Letter
"Together We Produce Great People"



=A Study Guide=

Approved by Dale R. Hoyt, Superintendent of Catholic Schools
Published by the Office of Catholic Schools
March 2008



**OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD**

467 BLOOMFIELD AVENUE • BLOOMFIELD, CONNECTICUT 06002-2999
TEL. (860) 242-4362 • FAX (860) 242-8683

Office of the
Superintendent
of Catholic Schools

Peace and greetings!

In the spirit of professional development, the Office of Catholic Schools, under the direction of Maria Maynard, Assistant Superintendent, has produced a study guide to be used in each school among administrator, faculty, staff, Schools Board, and Home and School Association. Its purpose is not only to understand clearly the Archbishop's message, but also to become engaged personally and professionally in reflection upon its deeper meaning for us in Catholic school education.

The guide is divided into four parts. Each part is separated from the previous one so that one section may be used at various meeting or gatherings. Discussion, sharing, and actually scribing each participant's thoughts should be the content of each encounter. The creation of specific actions should be the summary conclusion.

At the conclusion of your study of this pastoral letter, it is my hope that each of you will come away with a new awareness of and appreciation for the Archbishop's commitment to and direction for Catholic school education. His vision for the future, and the significant role that each of us plays in carrying out the strategic action plans will set the stage for a successful network of Catholic schools in the 21st century. Steeped in Catholic identity, providing outstanding academic programs, and making our schools available and accessible to all, we will "produce great people."

Peace in Christ Jesus,

Superintendent of Catholic Schools
Archdiocese of Hartford



Archbishop Henry J. Mansell's Pastoral Letter
"Together, We Produce Great People"

A Study Guide

INTRODUCTION:

In his pastoral letter, Archbishop Henry J. Mansell richly develops his statement of commitment to and support of Catholic school education. He begins with scripture as foundation and builds upon our personal call from God through His Church. Then he, draws back upon the traditions and history of the church as well as the roots of Catholic education in Hartford, and culminates with an enthusiastic statement of support for the strategic direction emanating from the Educational Symposium of 2007, which charts a bold course for the future of Catholic school education.

The study guide will outline the pastoral letter in four sections. Each section will provide a synopsis of a main topic while underscoring some major details. Following the summary, you will find reflective questions for discussion among your school faculties, Home and School Association officers, and school boards. There are also more directed questions for action plans.

It is important that all who read it understand the pastoral letter, and that each of us has the opportunity in community to discuss the various themes, articulating our personal thoughts and feelings and agreeing on additional action. A review of the *four core values* will set the stage for in depth discussion and review. Each of us weaves an important thread in the tapestry of Catholic school education. Through study and reflection, you will find the common threads to which we are all committed, and you will energize each other to work diligently to accomplish future strategic goals.



SECTION I: Scripture the Root of our Call

Summary

The Archbishop unites us in community by reminding us that Jesus commanded His disciples to “Go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation.” (Mark 16:15) Go forth and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. By virtue of our baptism, we are called by God to go forth and commit ourselves to the apostolic ministry of teaching. Mark’s gospel further leads us to the teaching ministry of Catholic school education. It is in this setting that we express faith in action, and bridge faith and knowledge for young people.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What are the most important elements of our Catholic school life that foster community for our students, families, and school staff?
2. What personal experience of community within your school has transformed you to be a model of faith in action?
3. Do you believe that you are called by baptism to care for some segment of human need? What is it? How is this call lived out in the school community you serve?
4. What is your understanding of the Good News? How are you Good News to others?
5. How are you integrating Jesus’ message with teaching and learning? Why?

What specific actions are needed to foster community in your school?



Section II: Education is the Vehicle for Community Building

Summary

The second section of the pastoral letter underscores *education* as an important vehicle for the mission of the Church. The dignity of person and the building of community are critical. Because community is central to the ministry of Catholic education, the Church must direct its efforts to the formation of community. The education of an individual Christian is not only significant to the destiny of that person, but also to the destinies of each member of the community.

Research has proven that Catholic schools are extremely effective in developing a child's spiritual, intellectual, physical, and social growth. Concurrently it is the responsibility of the Church in partnership with parents to cultivate religious, spiritual, and moral knowledge of the world and prepare our students to be productive moral citizens.

Catholic schools provide that development coupled with rigorous academics to shape that future. With the recognition that the need for articulate Catholic students today is every bit as important as it was in 1830, when the first Catholic school in Connecticut opened in the basement of The Most Holy Trinity Church, the Archbishop proclaimed his intention to preserve and advance the ministry of Catholic school education. We can only achieve this by "embarking on a plan for growth."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What do you consider the most important responsibility of a 21st Century Catholic educator today?
2. Do you consider yourself a partner with the school, parish, and greater Church of the Hartford Archdiocese in advancing the mission of the Church? How is this partnership lived out?
3. Discuss in what ways community is significant to an individual's destiny.
4. In what ways can you achieve the religious, spiritual, and moral development among students who are Catholic and those who are not Catholic?
5. How is the dignity of the human person lived out on a regular basis within the school community?

What actions will your school take to ensure that all students in the school community experience religious, spiritual, and moral formation?



SECTION III: Vision and Commitment

Summary

Archbishop Mansell promulgated a vision for Catholic schools in 2005. The primary role of Catholic schools is to produce students “imbued with the Catholic faith and simultaneously armed with critical thinking skills ready to assume church and civic responsibilities.” We commit to producing students with “Education for a Lifetime”. The Archbishop called everyone to have confidence in our future and to support the strategic direction coming out of the Educational Symposium that charts the course we will take.

He follows this with a clear statement of commitment:

- **To providing tuition scholarships** to families who choose but cannot afford Catholic school education through the Archbishop’s Annual Appeal and through the generous support of parishes in the archdiocese.

Archbishop Mansell then encourages parents:

- **To become involved in the educative process of their child(ren)** as they are the primary educators of them.

He encourages faculties and staff:

- **To increase awareness of the identity of the Catholic school** for it is from its Catholic identity that the school derives its character and structure as an instrument of the Church. The Catholic culture of the school is expressed through prayer, sacramental life, moral education, knowledge of faith, service learning, discussion of vocations, symbols of faith, sacred art and music, and the social teachings of the Church.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What steps has your school taken to deliver a curriculum rooted in faith while incorporating learning skills of the 21st century?
2. How have you encouraged educators and parents in your school community to engage in legislative educational issues? What types of activities have they accomplished?
3. Is your school a place of pastoral ministry?
4. In what ways does the faculty engage itself in the evangelization Mission of the Church?
5. Does your vocation lead to transformation for your students to demonstrate service and decision making in society?

What actions will you take with your students to underscore the school's responsibility to evangelize beyond the walls of the school ? Beyond the walls of the local parish ? Nationally ? Globally ?



SECTION IV: Academic Excellence

Summary

The Catholic school must be excellent in all of the programs provided for young people. Through adult faith formation and professional development, Catholic educators must commit to lifelong learning. It is imperative that we learn to assimilate data and new modes of thinking. The Office of Catholic Schools as well as other agencies must be a resource of service and hope. The Office of Catholic Schools must carry forth a plan, which will advance Catholic identity, quality education, availability, and accessibility of our schools. Furthermore, it will be the responsibility of this office to ensure viability and vitality of education in the Archdiocese of Hartford. Working closely with local parishes and communities, the Office of Catholic Schools will create new models for schools that should be maintained as well as identifying communities where schools will be built.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. How does your school community act as witness to our unity with Christ?
2. How do you celebrate the legacy of Catholic education?
3. What types of professional development or professional learning communities have you established in your school to address the following:
 - a. a better understanding of the full mission of evangelization for your faculty and students,
 - b. effective use of assessment to ensure student learning, and
 - c. analysis of test data by administration and faculty to address relative strengths and weaknesses in the academic program?
4. In your teaching ministry, do you equate academic excellence with Catholic identity?
5. Are the programs taught in your school vehicles that enable students to become active ministers of evangelization globally?

What actions will your school take to carry out the desire of the Archbishop that the responsibility of "Education for a Lifetime" is "to form, inform, and transform" our children to carry out the mission entrusted to the disciples - "to go forth and make disciples."?