

Good news! We don't need to invent "value propositions" for Catholic schools because they have, in fact, well-articulated "essential marks" that form children for happiness and holiness in Jesus Christ.

### The Solution: A Spreading Renewal of Catholic Education

Across the country and around the world, Catholic educators are transforming their school communities into vibrant centers of faith and learning by stepping away from the secular approach. They are changing the narrative of decline. Dying schools are being revived. New ones are being launched. After five decades of plunging enrollment and waning belief, it is now clear that the solution has been hiding in plain sight all along: Catholic schools flourish when they reclaim the Church's own educational tradition in the liberal arts and sciences.

Before the government controlled education, the Catholic Church developed this gold standard of education that formed some of the keenest minds and holiest saints in history. It is as powerful in the 21st century as it was in the 16th century, because it is based in the way God made us to learn and to become virtuous. Catholic educators are being renewed in their vocations as they discover how our own tradition thoroughly fulfills the five essential marks that distinguish a mission-driven school. Their students suddenly love learning, and parents are seeing the immense value of this deeply human formation.

Learn more about the exciting renewal that is forming children for happiness and holiness in the truth, goodness, and beauty of faith, at [CatholicLiberalEducation.org](http://CatholicLiberalEducation.org).

"An education in the fullness of humanity should be the defining feature of Catholic schools."  
- POPE FRANCIS

# THE CHURCH'S PROPOSITION FOR *Catholic Schools at All Times*

## The Five Essential Marks of Catholic Schools: A Roadmap for Happiness and Holiness

Mission-driven Catholic schools offer what no other model of education can provide, at any price. They form children from their earliest years in the confidence and joy that come from knowing that they are loved beyond measure by God, who draws them to Himself through the beauty, goodness, truth, order, and mystery of the universe He created. Nothing else can compare to this clear foundation for happiness and holiness. Parents long to give their children the best start in life, and Catholic schools rooted in the Church's tradition can meet that need most completely.

Authentically Catholic education embraces five essential marks that free the minds, hearts, and souls of children for human flourishing. Drawing from Church documents on education, Archbishop J. Michael Miller, former Secretary of the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, identified these essential elements in his 2006 publication, *The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools*. For a school to be genuinely Catholic, it must be intentional about how it embraces them:

1. Inspired by a supernatural vision
2. Founded on a Christian anthropology
3. Animated by communion and community
4. Imbued with a Catholic worldview throughout the curriculum
5. Sustained by Gospel witness

It has become increasingly clear that Catholic schools cannot fulfill their mission, nor meet these essential marks, when they adopt secular curricula and teaching strategies. The world is a different place through the eyes of faith: everything in Creation has meaning and purpose. Secular education erases the Creator from His Creation, and therefore undermines a child's ability to see wondrous connections and the unity of all knowledge. The flat landscape of a godless world makes learning a dull chore of random facts and skills to be learned for a test and then forgotten. Worse, the secular approach relentlessly erodes a child's faith in the Divine.

This proposition is based on the Church's time-tested vision of education, which has been articulated through a variety of magisterial documents. *The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools*, by Archbishop J. Michael Miller, former Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, faithfully summarizes the last fifty years of magisterial teaching on Catholic schools.



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