



INSTITUTE FOR
CATHOLIC LIBERAL
EDUCATION

Aspiring School Leaders Program

Prayer & Culture

DANNY FLYNN

Come Holy Spirit!



All: Come Holy Spirit! Fill the hearts of thy faithful and enkindle in them the fire of Thy love.

Leader: Send forth Thy spirit, and they shall be created,

All: And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Leader: Let us pray...

All: O God, Who by the light of the Holy Spirit, instructed the hearts of Thy faithful, grant us, in the same Spirit, to savor what is right and to ever rejoice in His consolation. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.



The Distracted Generation

- “I want AI to do my laundry and dishes so I can do art and writing. Not for AI to do my art and writing so I can do my laundry and dishes.”

-Joanna Maciejewska, Author



So God made a Farmer-Paul Harvey

- The harvest is rich but the laborers are few.
- There is an attempt to replace noble professions with convenience and ease of transaction
- Service experiences are being squeezed out and replaced by machines.
- Consider the impact of one fruitful crop or harvest.



Role of Catholic Education

"Here, then, I conceive, is the object of the Holy See and the Catholic Church in setting up [schools]; it is to reunite things which were in the beginning joined together by God, and have been put asunder by man...I wish the intellect to range with the utmost freedom, and religion to enjoy an equal freedom;...they should be found in one and the same place, and exemplified in the same persons."

— Cardinal Newman

"[This] is a place to encounter the living God This relationship elicits a desire to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Christ and his teaching."

— Pope Benedict XVI



Assess the Culture through the Eyes of Charity

- Only change what you cannot live with.
- Look for the good in everything and every person.
- Write notes after each event from your observations.
- Ask people where the event, idea or tradition originated from.
- Ask yourself how it could be improved or if it does not align with the mission and vision.
- Survey parents and students about their understanding of the existing culture.



Culture Shaping

“The greeks uniqueness came by way of increasingly founding their educational practices on universal principles that could be adopted by non-greeks as well. The word paideia came to mean much more: it referred to the overarching human and cultural toward which the whole society aspired.”
cf. The Heart of Culture.

“Revelation is like that first new fallen snow. It is a gift from above. It does not destroy the place beneath, but neither does it leave the earth as it was. Culture is born of our response to revelation. We shape culture and it is turn shapes us.” Topping Rebuilding Catholic Culture.

“A vibrant Catholic culture makes intelligible a model of life and the habits of being that fit us for heaven.” Topping Rebuilding Catholic Culture.



Shaping Culture: Worship vs Opinion

“Worship is the highest form of Knowledge. Opinion is the lowest form of knowledge.” Bishop Daly, July 2022

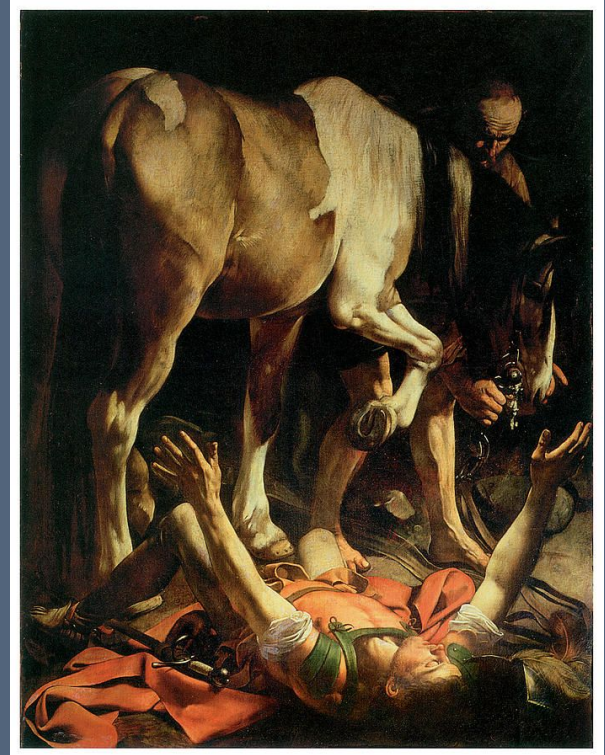
“Prayer shapes our aspirations. It teaches us what to hope in. The best way to live in the world is to realize that we are created for another world.” Topping Rebuilding Catholic Culture cf. p 200-201

- If I could create a formative environment for my own children what would it look like?
- Create new traditions aligned to the mission and vision.
- Make key personnel decisions with school culture in mind.
- Consider that your decisions have a long lasting effect.
- What do I want the students to remember 30 years from now?
- Are we appealing to their appetites or to feed their soul?

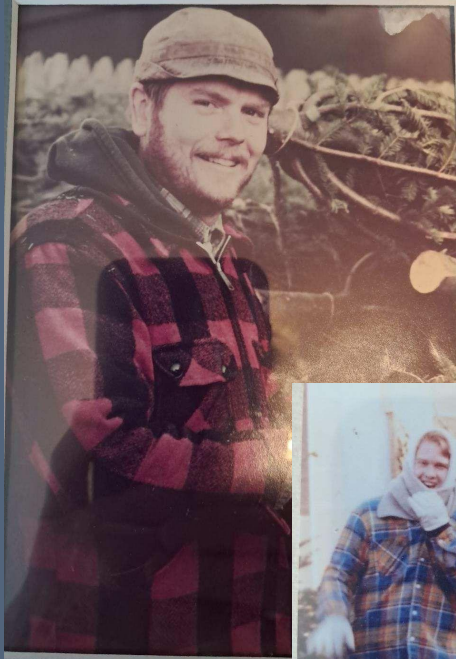


Metanoia- St Paul or making a U-turn in an Aircraft carrier

You have to sit on that and really think deeply, why am I here? If it is vocational, how do you approach your calling on a daily basis? Do you pray? How often? Do you pray for your students, your parent community, for the student that makes your blood boil? This is quintessential to your success as a teacher. You cannot give what you do not have. You are evangelizers/missionaries. Sometimes planting seeds, sometimes watering, oftentimes not seeing the fruit till years down the road.



Bob's Tree Lot



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Realigning Growth and Measurement in School Culture

- As an administrator there is a temptation to think that our school improved because of programs that I choose, books orders I make, people I hired, policies I create or budget maneuvers that save some money. Those are not measures of success in a school. Those are things that happen.
- Success is measured by real growth in the human person. This comes when they are loved. When the class clown or bully knows that they are loved and chooses the good. When students forgive, when they apologize, when they stop themselves mid-sentence, when a child or family is drawn to the Church and receives the sacraments. These things happen because of teachers and their mindset. How the live virtue. How they speak to a child, how they form them when the student has made a mistake.



Spontaneous/Natural Prayer vs. Planned and Formal Prayer

Spontaneous/Natural Prayer

- When you hear bad news
- Praying a decade of the rosary
- Making a visit to the chapel
- Transitions between classes
- Practicing Silence
- Taking intentions before difficult situations

Formal Prayer

- Mass
- Rosary
- Chaplet of Divine Mercy
- Angelus
- Stations
- Liturgy of the Hours



Rethinking In-Service



- After you have been gone all summer and had a break from work, are you really looking to dive back into the faculty handbook?
- The staff needs to connect on a human level as well, perhaps a feast or a meal together allows you to socially bond after a break and introduce new faces. Feed them good food. Everything should not be potluck.
- The week should have a retreat-like manner and schedule. Prayer and reflection should be built in.
- Do you have a motto for the year?
- Enrich them in the tenets of classical instruction.
- More time for curriculum planning and less time spent on bulletin boards.



Catholicism as the Unifying Culture?



- Incarnating the Logos is the unifying principle.
- How often do your students read scripture?
- What calendar are you really following?
- Will you celebrate cancer awareness month? What about ethnic heritage months?
- If you have festivals and feasts, which cultures are celebrated and represented?
- If the catholic means universal will you have various devotions and celebrations around solemnities and holy days?
- Do the students have anticipation to live devotions?



Reading within the Culture

- Teacher training should typically begins by new teachers receiving a box of books connected to their content area. Education is a handing on of a tradition in a person to person format. This can only come by way of loving the content over the method.
- Choose meaningful literature to expose your staff and students to: seminars topics would be specific and targeted. Choose things that are challenging and provoke real thought and discussion. Book fair selections should have the same delicacy of a doctor prescribing medicine to a patient.



Renounce Mediocrity-Grade Yourself

- Always be working on sharpening the tools in your box.
- *“Do not be afraid. Do not be satisfied with mediocrity. Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”* Pope John Paul II
- *“It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be ground down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal.”* Pope John Paul II
- Venerable Bishop Fulton Sheen used to head to Oxford each summer after the spring semester and tear up his lectures. Only to reread the church fathers and doctors and rewrite the lessons all over again with greater depth and insight.
- Take your 5 worst lessons at the end of the year and your best 5 lessons and compare and contrast. What you are actually doing is forming children. Formation is all encompassing. Get organized but know that you don't have it all figured out. You must plan. However, you need to adapt to the complexities of the class.
- Reflection each quarter on what worked and failed during this time period.



Thy Kingdom Come: Prayer as a School of Hope

“Even when good plans fail, hope in final conquest continues to inspire. Hope based on eternal life preserves us from the frantic toil as much as from paralyzing despair.” Topping p. 210

“Prayer, intimate dialogue with the One who is calling you to be His disciples, must come first. Be generous in your active life, young people, and be deeply immersed in the contemplation of God’s mystery. Make the Eucharist the heart of your day.” Pope John Paul II

“Prayer itself, born in Catholic families, nurtured by programs of Christian formation, strengthened by the grace of the sacraments, is the first means by which we come to know the Lord’s will for our lives. To the extent that we teach young people to pray, and to pray well, we will be cooperating with God’s call.” Pope Benedict XVI



Virtue and Holiness are Contagious



“Anyone who keeps close to a holy man discovers that by seeing him often, listening to his words and witnessing his exemplary behavior, he is set on fire with love of the truth, keeps away from the darkness of sin, and is inflamed by the love of divine light”. . .

“Seek the company of good people. If you share their company, you will also share their virtue.” - St. Bonaventure

“Virtue makes us aim at the right mark, and practical wisdom makes us take the right means.” - Aristotle



Positive Experiences within a Culture

1. Appealing to the human desires.
2. Enriching and restorative.
3. Explaining a deeper appreciation for various loves.
4. It is obvious that the culture understands the person they are serving.
5. You walk away from the experience desiring more.



Southwest®

Chick-fil-A®



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Business Example: Chick-fil-a Culture

- Chick-fil-a: We serve people. We just happen to sell chicken as well. When people thank them they say, “It’s my pleasure.” Every time. In fact that is the title of their employee philosophy manual.
- They’ve experienced a more than 10% sales increase almost every year since launching in 1946. Franchisees retention rate has been 96% for nearly 50 years, while the corporate staff retention rate has hovered at 95-97% over the same time period.
- However, Turner explains the real victory for the fast food industry icon is the growth of a culture that has nurtured and impacted so many people. As Turner writes, “Culture is the soul of an organization.” And every company has a culture, whether leaders consciously mold it or not.



Examples of Culture Builders from Schools

- Domestic Church Bulletins: Monthly reminders of ways to celebrate the liturgical calendar.
- Podcasts on parental formation.
- Tying in scriptural references when communicating difficult news to parents.
- Candlelight vespers together in the parish.
- Instead of just a Christmas pageant try lessons and carols.
- Litany of light ceremony from Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.
- Speaker series on various aspects of the curriculum.
- Mary's meals.
- Books studies on spiritual reading: Marian or St. Joseph Consecration.
- Gender separate Theology of the Body courses with parents.
- Jazz night with wine and cheese for parents.
- Class functions on weekends at historical sites, gardens, or pilgrimages.
- Sending handwritten thank-you cards to parents.



Examples of Prayer Habits and Practices

- Daily Mass, Rosary, Chaplet, Angelus
- Spiritual readings during meals
- Offering spontaneous prayers with parents before meetings. Mentioning their children by name in prayer.
- Practice full silence on a given day of the week and time
- Adoration
- Stations of the Cross
- Walking Rosary
- Monthly confession
- Students carrying the cross during Lent
- Asking for public intentions before staff meetings
- Announcing births at morning announcements
- Sending Mass cards or flowers to families when they lose a loved one.



Assignment for next month

1. Pick a liturgical season. Map out 2 ways in which you can enhance existing traditions and practices and 2 new traditions to the season as well that would be directly aligned to the mission and vision of the school.
2. Identify 2 aspects of the current school culture (where you work) that need improvement and explain why. Provide 2 alternative events or traditions in an effort to remedy the situation.



Discussion Questions

1. What evidence would you use to define a healthy school culture? Conversely, what are signs of a toxic culture?
2. What messaging would you use to your staff where there may be a need to improve the school culture?
3. What indicators can you use to determine the spiritual health of your staff, versus students and families?
4. What are some small steps you could take to turn a school around spiritually? What would your secret ingredient be?
5. If perfection is not the goal, how can an administrator strike a balance between areas for growth and knowing when you have achieved your goals?



Scenarios

1. The school where you work has one person who has been solely responsible for the spiritual formation of the entire campus for many years now. This person has pure intentions but is very 'letter of the law'. She believes that faith is lived by following every rule to a T. She is very outspoken about people who do not participate and who choose not to come to the spiritual events she organizes. As administrator, how can you both counsel her and help the spiritual life of the school continue to grow?
2. You started at a new school where the culture is defined for most families as 'Catholic' because it is the only private school surrounded by public schools. Most families do not engage in the parish and believe they are checking the 'Catholic box' by sending them to the school. How will you build a plan for the short term and the long term to invigorate the campus with a vibrant Catholic culture that extends well beyond the uniforms?
3. Your school is in the middle of a transition and it appears a large portion of the faculty are content with 'how they've always done things'. They are not opposed to Church Teaching but believe that they've always done things a certain way and consider themselves Authentically Catholic, so why is someone coming along and claiming to provide any suggestions in this area? As the administrator, what can be done to enrich the staff to see beyond their own limitations?
4. You meet with a group of parents at the end of the year and they are advocating for dropping the religion and literature curriculum and replacing it with the Baltimore Catechism and Lives of the Saints and claim this is the only way to Catechize. They have data from a straw poll of parents on this topic and it seems to show the same opinion being preferred. What is your next move?
4. As an administrator your minutes are typically already scooped up before you even start your day. What practical measures can you put in place to safeguard your own spiritual life so that you can then continue to share Christ?

