

A LETTER FROM BISHOP THOMAS OLMSTED, BISHOP OF PHOENIX

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In 1990, Pope John Paul II issued his encyclical letter *Mission of the Redeemer*, in which he said, “*I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church’s energies to a new evangelization No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples.*” All his successors, including Pope Francis, have enthusiastically endorsed and continued to issue this clarion call. To that end, one may wonder, “How does a Catholic school evangelize?”

Catholic schools assist the Church in her mission of evangelization in 5 ways:

1. to be a place of encounter with the living Jesus Christ;
2. to be places of Spirit-filled community;
3. to impart a Catholic worldview through the curriculum;
4. to assist students in becoming free; and
5. to send students out as missionary disciples to transform the culture.

Catholic schools, thanks be to God, are places of evangelization by assuring that all students have the basic Gospel message proclaimed to them, are confronted with a choice, and then given the freedom and help to make a response in faith.

A Catholic school is called to be more than an institution; it is a “genuine community of faith” A Catholic school is a Spirit-filled community of young people that affirms their dignity in being made in God’s image and likeness. This community of faith is built through the joint efforts of parents, teachers, administrators and students.

Catholic worldview imparted through the curriculum.

- Science and math classes are taught with a posture of wonder towards the created world, knowing that God has imbued all creation with intelligibility;
- Students are exposed to the best of Western Civilization — its literature, poetry, art, architecture, etc. — as it was taken up and perfected through the act of faith;
- History is seen through the eyes of faith knowing that Jesus is the Lord of History;
- Social and human problems are explored through the lens of Catholic social teaching, recognizing the dignity of the human person, and the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity.

A mark of a truly Catholic school is the fruit that is borne in the lives of its graduates. That fruit is to be shown in the missionary activity of its graduates, called and sent by Jesus to be salt and light in the culture around them, knowing that people and cultures die without Christ. As Pope Paul VI stated (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #24), It is “*unthinkable that a person should accept the Word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn.*”

When Catholic Education is what it is called to be, it too has the power to set the world on fire. May the parents, teachers and school children of our local Catholic schools — through their constant contact with Jesus the Word made Flesh — be inspired missionary disciples of His Kingdom.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Thomas J. Olmsted

Bishop of Phoenix

(condensed by Kerry Sievert, Divine Savior Principal)