

Public Education and MANDATORY CCD Class attendance

As we come closer to the beginning of another school year, I find it important as a pastor of souls to write and remind parents of their responsibilities in educating their children. The education to which I refer is less about physical and mental talents as it is about their moral upbringing and proper Christian character formation. Pope Pius XI outlined in his encyclical letters on *Christian Marriage* and the *Education of Youth* that the responsibility for this education and formation lies mainly with the parents and secondarily with teachers. It is this responsibility that I wish to address at this time.

Not every parent is able to accomplish the full education of their children directly — most must make use of schools established for the purpose of supporting the parents in this important duty. Therefore, it is important for those Catholic parents who cannot directly fulfill the role of the education of their children to make the proper choice of schools that will not only support them in their God-given responsibilities, but all assure them that such responsibilities are not directly undermined in these institutions. It was for this reason that Catholic pastors have established schools in their parishes to give strong assurance to the parents that their children are in safe hands. Catholic teachers and the traditional Catholic curriculum they present all help to fulfill what Catholic parents most need: the proper education and formation of their children according to the doctrinal and moral principles of the Roman Catholic Church.

As you are all aware, we have tried numerous times to establish a daily school in the parish, but to no avail. Various factors such as distance from the church, lack of finances, inconsistency of education for all in our annual periods of inclement weather and so forth all make it practically impossible to operate a daily school in a manner that is best for the children and their parents. However, we do operate a small parish school for the purpose of educating our parish's children in their religious responsibilities according to the traditional format known as the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) each Sunday during the school year with the highly valued assistance of the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Ghost. We offer courses not only for levels K - 12, but I teach catechetical style classes for adults during the same time period.

The CCD classes are primarily offered for those students, young and old, who require a supplemental course of religious studies while they attend non-religious schools. *These courses are mandatory for all students who attend schools of public education* — whether at the *primary*, *secondary* and *college/university* (even the so-called modern “catholic” schools) levels — as a means of making the danger of perversion to Faith and Morals in such schools *remote* instead of *proximate*. Parents who are familiar with the catechism teachings on this subject know that *we are never allowed to place ourselves in the proximate occasion of sin* (a person, place or thing that is truly a danger to Faith and Morals and which we have no real necessity to be around), but if there is a **real** necessity to be around such an occasion, *we are required under pain of mortal sin to make that occasion as remote as possible* by fortifying ourselves through prayer and a sound Catholic education of certain doctrinal and moral teachings.

This principle applies in our parish to the education of children in a direct way: *by Divine Law, no one is permitted to place their children in schools where their Faith and Morals are in danger of being perverted*, and the Church has supplemented this Law with her own rules. *This law binds all parents under serious sin, and when children have reached the age of majority* (18 years old in today's society) and know their moral obligations better than before (such as for attending courses of “higher education” in colleges and universities), they are equally bound *personally* to this law. The only way a parent or young adult can be kept from mortal sin in the areas of making use of

the facilities of public education is to make the *real and true danger to their Faith and Morals* in these institutions remote through prayer, study and spiritual reading at home and by attending the parish CCD classes faithfully each Sunday when they are offered. Unless such measures are taken by each parent and young adult, they cannot be excused from committing *mortal sin* simply because of the lack of care taken in avoiding and being strengthened against the unnecessary occasions of sin.

In case anyone is not convinced that public education *at all levels* does not present a proximate occasion of sin through the perversion of Faith and Morals (and we are a religion that highly prizes both aspects of Divine Revelation), consider this point: for *every minute* a Catholic child or young adult is subjected to public education, his or her Faith and sense of morality are challenged in the following ways:

- Public education pretends to present instruction in a “religion-neutral” atmosphere. In reality, the curriculum, the text books and the individual philosophy of the educational system as a whole, and of many teachers in particular, is to *neutralize religion* in the minds and hearts of the students under their care. This occurs, not only by forbidding prayer and the invocation of the True God in every manner He expects from His creatures, but the prayerful and philosophical practices of the false religions are not only taught, but are even upheld as something of personal benefit to mankind. The only practices that redound to man’s benefit are those which help him fulfill the purpose for which he was created: to know, love and serve God in this life and to be happy with Him in the next. It is these practices that are precisely *not* taught, and this is sinful.

- from such a practice the sin of *religious indifference* is fostered, a notion upheld in our country as one of its founding principles. This sin has us believe that all religions are of equal value and merit, that we all worship the “same God”, and that the notion of a single religion being the only true religion is both fanatical and cultish, and the source of most of society’s evils today. Unless a child is fully convinced of those principles outlined in the catechism in the section entitled *Why I Am A Catholic*, can explain these principles well, and defend them when under attack, then he or she will fall prey to this sin of religious indifference and may end up losing the Faith, get involved in bad marriages, and the like. The danger of moral perversion is great, and getting all the worse each and every day.

- Another subject that is pounded into the heads of our youth is something that has come to be known as “diversity training.” According to the modern *gospel of diversity*, the backgrounds, opinions and practices of others must all be accepted *without judgment* as to their morality or acceptability in society. Make no mistake, diversity is not the same as teaching the basic principles of Charity. Diversity teaches its students that the opinions of all must be accepted as true expressions of the one who brings them forward. Since morality and sound doctrine are no longer considered to be absolute principles in society today, diversity teaches that each person has a “right” to his or her opinion, even if that opinion is contrary to the Natural, the Divine and Church Laws. While Charity teaches us to love sinners, but to work and pray for their conversion, diversity upholds that the opinions and actions of others are never sinful, just “diverse” — and this “diverseness” is what all helps to make us better. Under this heading sexual immorality is deemed “healthy behavior,” sexual perversity is proclaimed to be a person’s natural right, and doctrinal errors all contribute to the “richness of the human fabric.” These and other wrongful behaviors are all protected under the gospel of diversity, and our unwary students think they are practicing Charity by being “diverse”.

- In the facilities of higher education, the Catholic student is subjected to false philosophies of life and matter that go contrary to those of traditional Catholic teaching. These false teachings are not presented as a means of studying their errors as compared to what is true; rather, they are presented as “alternative explanations” of man’s existence, his role with others, his ethical behavior and the like. Unless they are prepared, our Catholic students will absorb these sophisms

under the guise of being truly “educated” in a way they were prevented from learning before. Once the seed of doubt is planted, it is very hard to be rooted out.

- All this says nothing of the obvious issues regarding exposure to illicit drugs, to sinful behavior of all types, to excessive activities that take the student away from a spiritual life and a means by which the heart and soul can be daily strengthened against such dangers. Prayer, the Mass and Sacraments, spiritual reading and more all become secondary in their lives — a very dangerous frame of mind to be in.

Every minute the Catholic student is exposed to these and other like proximate occasions of sin, he or she risks the danger of no longer being able to recognize these errors for what they are simply because the student has been “desensitized” to them. A forty-minute CCD class each Sunday can barely hope to make our Catholic students strong against such dangers, and to repair the damage that is creeping into their hearts and souls (like the worst of viruses) without the parents’ help in the home. Imagine what things would be like without the aid of the CCD class. Perish the thought.

It is the duty of parents to be convinced of the truth of what is presented here, for if our parents do not have a sense of conviction about the proper doctrinal and moral education of their children, then how will they be able to answer their son or daughter when they feel peer pressure? How do you answer the world’s call to get involved in public education because it is “fun,” while a lack of involvement in it makes them look “weird” in front of their friends? Parents must work with those of their children who must take part in public education to help them take courses and be involved with only those friends and activities that will not present for them a doctrinal and moral danger. If they must go on to higher learning, help them to doctrinally and morally prepare for it *well in advance* so that they are not overwhelmed with the dangers they will meet. Have them investigate other alternatives for education and career choices (such as online colleges and vocational schools) that do not present the same proximate dangers to their Faith and Morals as public facilities do, thus making the danger for perversion even more remote.

Be assured of my prayers as you fulfill your responsibilities as a Catholic parent. I suggest you read the papal teachings on these matters to help you make these principles more firm in your mind. Above all, teach your children by example of the importance of a true Catholic education and of preserving their Faith and Christian morals every day of their lives. If you love your Faith, so will they.

Fr. Kevin Vaillancourt

Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church
3914 N. Lidgerwood St. • Spokane, WA 99207 • www.ladyofguadalupe.net