

## Module 4: Life of the Church - Past and Present - Discussion Church and School

### Work With It

*We live in a secular society where religious sensibilities often take a back seat to the hubbub of a life filled with activities: work, school, extra-curricular activities, making meals, house cleaning, entertainment, shopping, etc. Where do we find time in our lives for the sacred? For many Catholic students, their only exposure to church is the lived expression of faith in the Catholic school system.*

*Reflect on the readings and the school community in which you serve by considering the following two questions:*

*To what extent is your school a church for your students? Think beyond the school masses and consider the day-to-day life of the school and perhaps your class in particular. Consider the role for students, parents, administrators, teachers, and the church community (clergy, youth ministers)*

*How can your school come to resemble church more closely? To help you answer that question, think of what principles and practices you can learn from the early church community that you can incorporate into your classroom or school.*

### RESPONSE

1. I agree that we inhabit a secular society in which our awareness of religion is secondary to more valued activities such as work, school, co-curricular teams/clubs, consumerism, entertainment...I also agree Catholic student exposure to the teaching of the Catholic Church is limited to their involvement and engagement in their respective school community. This places increased responsibility to the role Catholic schools need to fulfill in fostering continuity, growth and development of future generations of Catholics. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (nd) states that education is a complex task, made more difficult by rapid social, economic, and cultural changes. Therefore it is of paramount importance that our schools change a pace congruent to which is occurring outside it's walls in society. According to the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (nd) it is the schools role to facilitate the formation of young people through offering opportunities to develop their own physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual gifts, to develop their sense of responsibility, learn the correct use of freedom, and participate actively in social life. We have a very active school which offers plethora of opportunities for student engagement to develop into a full human person. Currently in our school we have a school wide initiative called "Best Buddies". Facilitated by teachers and senior students and directed by students with special needs, this coalition attempts to increase involvement of students with special needs to create a more inclusive school learning environment. Various activities are organized on a monthly basis to achieve this inclusive caring school culture. Currently our "hoop it up" activity will give opportunity to students to buy out of period 4 to engage in a basketball free throw shooting competition held in our gymnasium. Proceeds of the buyout go to assisting families in the community who have children with special needs. This activity fosters development of the social, physical and moral self in a fun and engaging celebration of helping through "hooping it up".

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2. Having your school resemble the church is vital due to our young peoples decreasing opportunity to engage in and embrace church life. Therefore the importance on the school to create a Catholic Community is magnified. Lavin (2009) discusses that in order to build a more church like school, the needs of the student population must be known, students should have options to live out their authentic self and students should be loved and nourished for the gifts contributed to the school community. As teacher we can assist in creating a Catholic Community by getting to know our students. This can be achieved through the use of surveys to gather data identifying their values and needs. In co-operation with administration teachers can work with students to create clubs, teams, initiatives...which meets the specific needs of the school community. Giving the student's voice, helps increase their sense of responsibility, which makes them more morally conscious on how to act on a day to day basis.

### References

Lavin, M. (2009). What we believe: Practical theology for teachers. Ottawa: Novalis.

Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (n. d.). Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education in Schools. Retrieved from [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_20090505\\_circ-insegn-relig\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20090505_circ-insegn-relig_en.html) 24 February 2016.