

E-ducator

Back-to-School Edition

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Growing in Wisdom, Age & Grace

Above and Beyond

Four New Blue Ribbon Schools



On September 8, 2008, the U.S. Department of Education designated four Diocesan schools as *Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence*. These schools were among six Northern Virginia schools that received the honor and were the only private schools in the Commonwealth named this year. The number of Blue Ribbon Catholic schools in the Diocese is now twelve.

We Congratulate...

1. Blessed Sacrament School, Alexandria
2. Holy Spirit School, Annandale
3. Saint John Academy, McLean
4. School of the Nativity, Burke

What Makes a Blue Ribbon School

To be recognized as a *Blue Ribbon School of Excellence*, schools must be invited to apply by the Department of Education (DOE). The process is as follows:

September: The DOE invites the Council for American Private Education (CAPE) to nominate schools demonstrating academic excellence and dramatic gains in student achievement.

January: CAPE recommends its selection of schools to the DOE.

February: Schools formally apply.

March - April: A DOE review board assesses the applications.

September: Schools are awarded *Blue Ribbon* status.

November: An formal DOE recognition ceremony is held in Washington, D.C.

From the Desk of the Interim Superintendent

Dear Friend:

When Bishop Loverde asked me to serve as the interim Superintendent of Schools, I immediately felt honored to come to a Diocese recognized throughout the country for its academic excellence. The wonderful work initiated by my predecessor, Dr. McNiff, is remarkable. I am pleased to continue in the tradition and the mission of the Diocese, as it relates to educating our youth.

As the school year begins, the Diocese of Arlington schools are strong in academics, strong in enrollment, and strong in moving forward into the 21st century. Pope John Paul the Great Catholic High School joins our other Diocesan Catholic high schools in laying the foundation of how students can develop into moral leaders of tomorrow by following Catholic

principles in a technologically-driven society.

I am grateful for the hard work and leadership of all of our school principals. I am especially impressed with our six new principals as well as our three new high school chaplains. I pray that the Holy Spirit will be their guide and that their ministry will be an inspiration for our students to share their faith with others.



Sister Bernadette McManigal, B.V.M.

In closing, our four new *Blue Ribbon Schools* – Blessed Sacrament School, Holy Spirit School, Saint John Academy, and the School of the Nativity – are a point of pride for the Diocese. Their dedication to helping students develop and grow intellectually and spiritually is evidence of why the Diocese of Arlington Catholic schools are widely respected throughout the United States.

In the News

Pope John Paul the Great Opens

After 13 years of planning and building, Pope John Paul the Great Catholic High School greeted its first students on August 25th. Please click [here](#) for the Catholic Herald article detailing the first day of school.

Two weeks earlier, the school's chapel was dedicated by Bishop Loverde. He then blessed the entire school in a public ceremony the following day. The Dumfries newspaper, the [Potomac News](#), covered the blessing ceremony.

Student Performs at Wolf Trap

Bishop O'Connell senior, Maddie Arthur, was selected as a cast member for Wolf Trap's production

of *Les Miserable*. More information about Arthur's casting can be found [here](#).

Did you know...?

Over 600 eighth grade students from the Class of 2008 continued on to one of the four Diocesan Catholic high schools.

Over 550 teachers attended summer training programs that were offered by the Office of Catholic Schools. Classes included CPR/First Aid, interactive white board training, curriculum mapping, Catholic virtues, and differentiated instruction.

Behind the Chalkboard

New Religion Courses to Build Stronger Connection to Christ

Freshmen in Diocesan Catholic high schools are studying religion in a completely new way. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ in Scripture* is replacing the typical fall semester-long course on Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and *Who is Jesus Christ?* is replacing the spring semester course on the Catholic faith or “Catholic Christianity.”

Both courses are part of a new religion program Bishop Loverde is implementing based on the [U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops \(USCCB\)-approved curriculum framework](#).

Beginning with this year’s freshmen class, implementation will take place over four years. Next year, as sophomores, these students will study *The Mission of Jesus Christ*, with an emphasis on the Paschal Mystery, and *Jesus Christ’s Mission in the Church*, which will focus on ecclesiology (study of the nature of the Church) rather than a course in Church history.

All together, there are six semester-long required core courses in the curriculum and five suggested electives. High schools may also select their own electives for seniors or teach one in the junior year and one in the senior year. A strong Christological theme unites all the courses in the curriculum.



Paul VI High School teacher, Mr. Christopher O'Brien, instructing his freshman religion class.

Bishop Loverde is actively promoting the new religion program by meeting with the religion departments to explain the logic behind this new curriculum. Citing *Catechesi Tradendae*, the Bishop says the new courses will put young people “not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ.” It is not enough, according to Bishop Loverde, to have knowledge of

religion; students also need to know and grow in their friendship with Christ.

Previous Hebrew Scripture courses took a chronological perspective of Biblical history, providing students a broad view of cultural, religious and literary influences that shaped Old Testament books. The new course this fall explores how the Old Testament is fulfilled through Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Bishop Loverde thinks the new program provides a complete and comprehensive presentation of the Catholic faith in a way that empowers students to defend their beliefs. Each course contains a section called “Challenges” that offers practical, age-appropriate questions. The goal is to provide young Catholics the necessary apologetic skills to respond clearly and confidently to tough questions they may encounter from nonbelievers or non-Catholic Christians.

While textbooks based on the new curriculum are still being developed, religion teachers have been creating and sharing materials and resources electronically through a teacher-restricted webpage hosted on the Office of Catholic Schools’ website.

Seal of Excellence

Back when Bishop Ireton was a Church leader and not yet the name of a high school in the Diocese of Arlington, two brothers began attending a brand new Diocesan elementary school: St. Thomas More Parochial School, located in Arlington. Little did they know then that the spiritual formation they would receive at the school would carry through to their distinguished careers in the fields of education and politics.

Dr. Donald and Dr. Michael Uhlmann credit St. Thomas More Parochial (now Cathedral) School with instilling in them Catholic values that continue to be their guiding principles.

“The life of the Church is the Eucharist,” said Dr. Michael Uhlmann. “Everything else revolves around it. The Servant Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (I.H.M.), who used to teach there, got that into our heads.” Both brothers attended St. Thomas More through their eighth grade year, graduating in 1950 and 1953, respectively. Both continued onto a Catholic high school and later Yale University.

Dr. Donald Uhlmann then attended Harvard to pursue his doctoral studies in physics. After earning his degree, he was invited to be a postdoctorate fellow. Two years later he went on to teach at MIT. In 1986 Dr. Uhlmann was asked to serve as Department Head of the newly-



Dr. Donald Uhlmann (left) and his brother, Dr. Michael Uhlmann (right), distinguished alumni of St. Thomas More Cathedral School.

created Department of Materials Science and Engineering at Arizona University. Dr. Uhlmann has also written a standard textbook on Materials Science still in use at many universities today.

For Dr. Michael Uhlmann, his graduate studies took him to the University of Virginia where he earned a degree in law and to Claremont Graduate University in California where he earned his doctorate. After working in private law practice for a few years, Dr. Uhlmann accepted a position as a staff counsel for an influential U.S. Senator. His work ethic and diligence caught the eye of President Gerald Ford who appointed him to serve as an Assistant Attorney General. Nearly half a decade later, Uhlmann would again find himself in the White House, this time as a Special Assistant in the White

House Office of Policy Development under President Ronald Reagan.

Shortly after the *Roe V. Wade* decision, Dr. Michael Uhlmann worked closely with Senator James Buckley (R-NY) in proposing a bill known as the *Human Life Amendment* that would have included embryos in the definition of “a person,” as it relates to the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The bill, however, failed to make it to the Senate floor.

“This is the great cause of our time,” Dr. Michael Uhlmann said. “Abortion is the maximum gesture that desecrates an act of God.” His pro-life stance led him to write *Last Rights?: Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia Debated*, which defends the other end of Catholicism’s pro-life teachings, natural death.

Both brothers are now in the field of education. Dr. Donald Uhlmann is a professor emeritus in the Science Department at Arizona University, and Dr. Michael Uhlmann is a professor in the Department of Politics and Policy at Claremont Graduate University. They continue to attend daily Mass and keep their focus on their Catholic faith.

“The Eucharist is the key to spiritual formation,” Dr. Michael Uhlmann said. “Keep love and respect for the Eucharist in the forefront of your mind, and everything will be okay.”

Why Am I a Catholic School Teacher?

By Brother Rick Wilson, T.O.R., Academic Dean at Bishop Ireton High School



Before I entered the Franciscans, I was a public school teacher for two years. Since 1983, I have taught almost continuously at a diocesan high school in the Northern Virginia area. Though my public school counterparts make higher salaries,

I would not trade places with them for any price. Let me explain.

I was recently at a summer institute for secondary AP teachers. The majority of the participants were public school teachers. During the week we had the opportunity to share our own “war” stories from the classroom trenches. Much of what I heard was not new. In fact, it sounded strangely familiar: moral relativism, SOL’s, limited resources, and more. The one resounding theme was adolescents in search of direction and acceptance—sometimes at any cost. When the discussion turned to finding solutions to our problems, there was a lot of finger pointing and little accountability. This prompted me to reflect about what I do as a Catholic school teacher and how I choose to address these problems. It was then I realized that we have some creative opportunities in our Catholic schools that our public school colleagues do not.

We open our school day with a prayer led by the principal and the reading of special intentions. The kids go to advisory, our version of homeroom—yet something more. The advisor is an advocate, a counselor for each student for all four years, ensuring each student has an adult to go to if experiencing problems at home or school. Like the school day, each class opens with the “Direction of Intention” and a prayer. Teachers share their unique spiritual identity in this way. As a Franciscan, my classes open with the “Prayer for Peace.”

Let me elaborate further. I teach American and British literature. Yet I feel I teach more than literature. In the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins, I long to show my students that “The World is charged with the Grandeur of God.” In such a world, students learn to honor the gifts they have received, and indeed, those gifts must be honed and practiced if they are to mature to effectiveness.

Whether we are studying *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* and Randall P. McMurphy as a Christ-like figure or Holden Caulfield’s search for an “I-Thou” relationship or Annie Dillard’s encounter with the “Holy” in the quotidian encounters of at Tinker Creek, I strive to teach my classes to discover their own story and to connect it with the stories of salvation history. As one former student

wrote to me recently, “Brother, I learned in your class how to keep my head-bone connected to my heart-bone.” Though not great anatomy, that comment made my day.

In his poem, “Leaves of Grass,” Walt Whitman writes, “I am the poet of the body and I am the poet of the soul...” His words in this line remind us of absence, ambiguity and embodiments of existential possibility. They call us to reflect on our work as “companion-tutors,” an ancient notion of how teachers do their work. The tutor, or *paedagogus*, was a slave who accompanied the student to school, sat through the lesson and drilled the student on the lessons when he returned home. Being a tutor meant sharing the schooling with the student and leading the student to the full meaning of the lessons learned.

Clement of Alexandria, in the second century, described the work of Jesus Christ as that of a *paedagogus*. Those working in the Christian tradition uniquely participate in the work of accompanying students in

“This is not an education FOR anything; it is an education OF someone, of a human person.”

the process of education. This education is not one that produces lawyers, engineers, computer programmers and the like. Careers, making a living, job specialization are useful, but they are not enough. This is not an education FOR anything; it is an education OF someone, of a human person.

Such a perspective allows us to realize that whatever furthers humanization also furthers the work of the Church. “The Church is the community in which intimate union with God and the unity of all humanity is demonstrated to be identical, because there the identity of the two is lived.”

What I am suggesting is that teaching has something in common with the most difficult of relational skills – listening. When we sit quietly with people, simply being present to them, it sometimes allows them to relax and blossom until they are as much of themselves as they can be. We subordinate our own authority and “brilliance” to the unfolding of the students’ self-knowledge and self-direction. In this way, teaching becomes a profession where we must do what Rev. William O’Malley, S.J. lists as pedagogical imperatives:

- Make them genuine and curious.
- Teach them to be honest before the data.
- Teach them to think logically, thoroughly, open-mindedly.
- Teach them to care for each other.

- Teach them to stand up and be counted.

Why am I a Catholic school teacher? I believe I teach more by what I am than by what I teach. A Catholic school teacher speaks intimately to the heart. The film *Field of Dreams* with Kevin Costner (based on the book by John Kinsella) is a tribute to baseball and the players who were accused of throwing the World Series in 1919. I believe the film has at its core some truths about Catholic school teaching and the “Field of Dreams we build” in our students.

In the film, Ray Kinsella, a novice corn farmer, begins to hear voices that he believes are divinely inspired. The first of these messages booms out clearly and succinctly, “If you build it, he will come!” Despite testing his sanity he asks for input from other farmers about their experience of hearing voices in the corn. The most he receives are looks of consternation and doubt. Nonetheless, he plows under his crop to the unbelief of his neighbors.

A second voice commands, “Ease his pain.” This too provides misunderstanding but continues this almost prophetic search for meaning. He proceeds to capture Terrance Mann—a fictional mix of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. and J.D. Salinger. Once he has kidnapped Mr. Mann, the voice instructs him to “Go the distance.” (I will leave you to read the book’s epiphany.)

What do these prophetic exhortations mean to teachers? “If you build it, he will come,” means we build the Kingdom every day; we have the chance to mold the young minds into a kingdom of dreams yet unfulfilled.

“Ease his pain,” means every time we sin, we are less than human. Our humanity is diminished. We put the nails of Golgotha into every piece of our Lord’s flesh with our lying, our gossiping, those petty vagaries that drive hard Roman steel into our Savior’s flesh.

Finally, “Go the distance.” This Pauline exhortation to run the good race, to seek out the good fight, urges teachers to remain committed to the goal of our future, our students. We must go the distance because our students are counting on us.

Why do I teach in a Catholic School? So I can build a field of dreams, a field for future students and teachers to knock out that homerun and to remember that the one that “takes a hand, opens a mind, touches a heart and shapes the future.” At several points in the film, after a ball player has spent some time in that field of dreams, he asks, “Is this Heaven?” As Catholic school teachers, we too bring a little bit of heaven to our classrooms—our field of dreams.