

What Does it Mean to be Alive in Christ?

DECLARATION ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

“Catholic schools are my first priority!” Archbishop Carlson spoke these words for the first time shortly after he arrived as the new Archbishop of St. Louis. Since then, he has worked very hard to make Catholic schools truly *Alive in Christ!*

Back in 1965, almost every Catholic child attended a Catholic school, and most of the teachers and principals were priests and religious sisters. Catholic schools were crowded and parishes could hardly build them fast enough! Sadly, today, things have changed. There are fewer religious vocations, and the cost of Catholic education has risen to the extent that often Catholic families have a hard time affording it for their children. Enrollments in Catholic schools are down all over the nation. Are Catholic schools still important?

As we celebrate the Year of Faith, we remember the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. One of the Council documents, *The Declaration on Christian Education*, gives us an important insight into how Catholic education impacts society. The Council Fathers teach us that school is important, and every human person has a right to attend one. The document states that Catholic schools are especially valuable because they teach everything students would learn in a public school, and more! Catholic education is complete because students can also learn about God and how to be people of faith and service. Because our schools are *Alive in Christ*, service is offered to those in need because it is what Jesus asks of us, and when anyone, at any time, enters a Catholic school, it is visually and perceptually evident that it is a school *Alive in Christ* with images and behaviors that speak louder than mere words ever could!

The Declaration on Christian Education stresses that Catholic schools depend on teachers to work with parents, who are their child’s “first teachers,” and so it is very important that teachers in Catholic schools have “special qualities of mind and heart, very careful preparation, and continuing readiness to renew and to adapt.” It is also important that there be all kinds of Catholic schools—elementary and secondary, colleges and universities, and schools for students with special interests and special needs.

All these things are still true today! And Archbishop Carlson is asking all of us to work very hard to protect and preserve Catholic schools, and to make sure they stay very true to their “Catholic identity,” giving students the gift of the Catholic faith, as well as all the human knowledge they need to be successful Catholic adults.

Q.How do Catholic schools contribute to the family, Church and community?

Q.What does it look like and sound like when a Catholic school is “*Alive in Christ!*”?

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