Catholic Talent Project Recruits Faithful, Young Catholics as Catalysts for the Renewal of Catholic Education

Boston Catholic Schools' initiative becomes a national model for forming young faithful Catholic professionals as educators and leaders for Catholic schools nationwide

Boston, MA, August 7, 2024— With record numbers of young Catholics falling away from their faith by high school graduation, a new lay apostolate will focus on ensuring every student in Catholic schools has a faithful Catholic witness as their classroom teacher and school leader. The nonprofit effort will be led by the former Superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Archdiocese of Boston and backed by influential lay leaders who have been involved as donors and board members with some of the leading Catholic organizations in the United States.

86 percent of young people leave the Catholic faith by the age of 18, and more than half have already lost their faith by the time they turn 13. Yet, many of these young people have attended Catholic schools their whole lives, highlighting the failure of many Catholic schools to adequately form the next generation of believers.

The Catholic Talent Project, a new lay apostolate, seeks to develop a national talent pool of faithful young men and women to be living witnesses of the Catholic faith in thousands of classrooms. The project will be led by Thomas W. Carroll, who is credited with creating a "renaissance of Catholic education" in the Archdiocese of Boston during his five years as Superintendent of Catholic Schools under Cardinal Seán O'Malley.

Carroll replaced 75 percent of parochial school leaders over five years, focusing on recruiting school leaders committed to evangelization and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. Carroll also crisscrossed the nation, recruiting recent college graduates who were faithful and talented to serve as witnesses to the Catholic faith as classroom teachers. Carroll now seeks to work with bishops across the nation who are interested in reviving Catholic schools as "a powerful instrument of evangelization."

Carroll has support from leading Catholics who serve as board members or key supporters of such organizations as FOCUS, the Augustine Institute, Thomas Aquinas College, the Papal Foundation, and the Knights of Columbus Charitable Trust.

"If we fail to arrest the massive number of students losing their faith, even in our own schools, the Church in America will go the way of Europe within a generation," said Carroll. "We will have small pockets of faith, but most churches will become little more than tourist sites and backdrops for fancy weddings."

Currently, 1.6 million students are enrolled in Catholic schools from preschool through 12th grade. Carroll estimates that students are in Catholic schools for an estimated 16,000 hours during that period. “The problem isn’t a lack of time or a shortage of students. We must be intentional about who we hire and restructure our Catholic schools to evangelize our students and families. The collapse of the broader culture makes this challenging, but not impossible,” Carroll explained. “The core challenge is putting the right people on the field, including faithful superintendents, school leaders, and classroom teachers.”

When announcing Carroll’s retirement from the Archdiocese of Boston, Cardinal Seán O’Malley praised Tom’s achievements in “enhancing the Catholic identity of our schools.”

The Catholic Talent Project will initially solicit partnership proposals from up to 10 dioceses nationwide, seeking bishops fully committed to placing a witness in every Catholic classroom. The Catholic Talent Project seeks to implement these initial partnerships over the next five years.

For more information and a complete press kit, visit https://catholictalentproject.org/media-kit/.

Tom Carroll is available for comment. To schedule an interview, contact Carrie Kline at carriek@missionadvancementpartners.com.

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