
FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS: A STRATEGY FOR FUTURE SERVICE TO CHURCH AND NATION 61-69 (1970); New York State Council of Catholic School Superintendents, Another Aspect of the Financial Crisis in Education: The Current Problem of Support for the Education of Catholic Elementary and Secondary School Children, 16 CATH.Â 1969); Huth, Catholic Education: To Be or Not To Be?, 97 SCHOOL & SOCIETY 101 (1969). Some current attitudes signify a marked shift from the status once enjoyed by Catholic schools: Not many years ago, the question that is now being asked—whether Catholic schools have a future—would have been unthinkable. Catholic schools occupied the same impregnable position as fish on Friday and the Latin Mass. Over the last generation, Catholic schools have been buffeted by a confluence of winds: changing demographics in the urban neighborhoods where many of their facilities are located, the disappearance of nuns and priests from classrooms, new competition from tuition-free charter schools. Finances crumbled, enrollments fell, and 6,000 schools were closed. Yet two million children remain in Catholic schools today. This includes a great many low-income and minority youngsters for whom Catholic schooling is a lifeline in an otherwise dysfunctional neighborhood. The Catholic Church in the United States is larger than ever. Many of our people are more financially successful, and they have moved into areas of our nation where, in the past, Catholics were a rarity. Catholic parishes and schools face the challenge of addressing the spiritual, educational, social, and cultural needs of a new wave of immigrants. In responding to the needs of these individuals, we must continue our evangelizing efforts by maintaining our schools’ Catholic identity and mission. I American Catholics love their Catholic schools. Eighty-eight percent view them favorably (versus 70 percent who view Pope Benedict XVI favorably). Yet it is the schools’ religious mission that inspires most Catholics and may move them to support the schools financially. The attribute that 91 percent of Catholics most associate with their parochial schools is developing moral values and discipline. For Church leaders. 1. Make Catholic education affordable for all Catholic children. 2. Make educating the poor a signature Church mission once again. In Washington and New York, the nation’s attention will focus briefly on the Roman Catholic Church and its institutions. Soon thereafter, President Bush will host a White House conference on inner-city faith-based schools.