**Catholic Education**

The Good News of Christ continually renews the life and culture of fallen man; it combats and removes the error and evil which flow from the ever-present attraction of sin. It never ceases to purify and elevate the morality of peoples. It takes the spiritual qualities and endowments of every age and nation, and with supernatural riches it causes them to blossom, as it were, from within; it fortifies, completes, and restores them in Christ.”

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2527,
 citing *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 58 § 4

As indicated in the quotation from the *Catechism*, the Gospel is intended to bring about the renewal of culture. It is not merely a personal or private matter which impacts the good of individuals; though it does indeed benefit individuals, the Gospel is intended to transform society as a whole.

In a special way, Catholic schools play a role in shaping young people to go out and transform the culture in which they live, claiming it for Jesus Christ and His Kingdom:

The influence of the Church in the field of education is shown in a special manner by the Catholic school. No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth. But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through baptism as they develop their own personalities, and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and man is illumined by faith. So indeed the Catholic school, while it is open, as it must be, to the situation of the contemporary world, leads its students to promote efficaciously the good of the earthly city and also prepares them for service in the spread of the Kingdom of God, so that by leading an exemplary apostolic life they become, as it were, a saving leaven in the human community (Vatican II, *Declaration on Christian Education*, 8 § 1).

Of particular importance, when reflecting on the relationship of Catholic schools to the culture, is the final line: a Catholic school forms students so that by “leading an exemplary apostolic life…become, as it were, a saving leaven in the human community.” A Catholic school is meant to impart an apostolic life, from the Greek *apostelein*, “one who is sent.” The students are to be sent out into the wider community to act, in the beautiful image given in one of the parables of Christ, as saving “leaven” in the larger human community.

We must impart this apostolic vision to our students; they must come to recognize themselves as the “light of the world” and the “salt of the earth” (cf. Matthew 5:13-16). Their Catholic education is not for them alone: it is a gift which they must pour out into the world in which they live, especially as they go off to college and the workforce. They must be the light of Christ to all those they meet in their lives, bring the light of the Gospel to shatter the darkness of the world.