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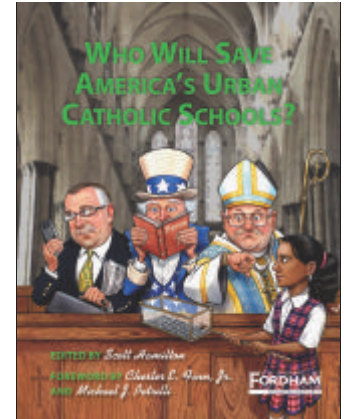
NUTSHELL



WHO WILL SAVE AMERICA'S URBAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS?

America's urban Catholic schools are in crisis. Over 1300 of them have shut down since 1990, mostly in our cities. As a result, some 300,000 students have been displaced—double the number affected by Hurricanes Rita and Katrina. These children have been forced to attend other schools at an estimated cost to taxpayers of more than \$20 billion.

Fordham's latest report, which includes a comprehensive survey of the attitudes of U.S. Catholics and the broader public towards inner-city Catholic schools, examines this crisis and offers several suggestions for arresting and perhaps reversing this trend in the interests of better education. By looking at seven case studies, the report shows that in a few cities, such as Wichita, urban Catholic education is making a comeback. However, in other cities like Milwaukee and Washington, D.C., despite public voucher programs, enrollment continues to decline and/or schools are being closed or converted into charters.



“With Pope Benedict about to arrive in Washington and New York, the nation’s attention will focus briefly on the Church and its key institutions,” said Chester E. Finn Jr., President of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute. “Days later, President Bush will host a White House conference on inner-city ‘faith-based’ schools. Now is a terrific time to recognize that a national treasure—and one of the great accomplishments of the Catholic Church in America—is perishing and to consider what, if anything, can be done about it.”

Findings from the National Survey

American Catholics and the wider public have a more favorable view of Catholic schools than of the Church itself—or of the Pope (about whom many Americans know little).

% FAVORABLE	ALL ADULTS	CATHOLICS
Salvation Army	91	92
American Red Cross	89	90
Catholic Schools	66	88
The Catholic Church	58	89
Pope Benedict XVI	42	70
Local parish priest	NA	80

Recommendations

For Pope Benedict XVI and U.S. Church leaders

1. Make Catholic education affordable for all Catholic children.
2. Make educating the poor a signature Church mission once again.

3. Revive some by closing the other urban parochial schools.
4. Turn excess school facilities over to charter networks with a proven track record.

For parishioners, philanthropists, and Catholic school supporters

5. Overcome nostalgia and face these problems head-on.
6. Answer the call from bishops who make education their priority.
7. Create and support new networks of Catholic schools.
8. Grow and replicate ACE – the Teach For America for urban Catholic schools.
9. Promote efforts to collect data, foster transparency and astutely “market” Catholic schools.

For public policymakers

10. Find ways beyond Title I services and school lunches to provide (federal, state and local) financial assistance to urban Catholic schools and needy children who attend them.