

***"This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."  
May Lent be a spiritual renewal for all of us.***

On February 21-22 I had the privilege of attending the Alberta Catholic Trustees' Association Symposium on Education. The following is my report. I believe both presentations are of interest to CWL as we have a vested interest in education for, as we say, the children are our future.

## **Growing Forward: A Catholic Education Symposium**

*hosted by ACSTA*

February 21-22, 2014

Archbishop Jordan High School

Sherwood Park, Alberta

### **GROWING FORWARD**

**Speakers:** Archbishop Miller – Archdiocese of Vancouver  
Dr. Reginald Bibby – University of Lethbridge

**Registrants:** Hierarchy – Bishop Henry, Archbishop Smith  
Trustees from across the province  
Superintendents, principals, teachers  
Clergy  
Interested persons

**Facilitator:** Sandy Prather

#### **Focus Questions:**

What is your "take" on religious trends in Canada?  
How do you see our schools fostering their Catholic identity?  
Practical means of assessing a Catholic school.  
What do you think people expect of Catholic schools?

**Format:** Reflection of focus question  
Presentation of focus question  
Discussion of presentation.

#### **Dr. Bibby's Presentations:**

*Presentation 1* focused on his latest research captured in his 2012 book:  
***A NEW DAY ... the Resilience and Restructuring of Religion in Canada.***

Some of his findings:

Religious Trends in Canada

- Growth of Immigrants is growing Catholicism as well as other religions
- Polarization of religion in Canada between the religious and non-religious
- Religion is well and healthy with the largest group being Catholics and the Pentecostals coming in second

- One in three Canadians are involved in religious groups
- Canada's teenagers show a high level of interest in both religion and spirituality
- One in two Canadians identify as Catholic even though they are lapsed

*Presentation 2* **The Great Catholic Opportunity in Canada and Alberta**

Focused on the expectations of people have of Catholic Schools

- Academic excellence
- Significant involvement in parishes
- Better ministry to the family

Check out Dr. Bibby's work by googling Reginald Bibby and going to "A NEW DAY"

**Archbishop Miller's Presentations**

*Presentation 1* focused on the five marks of a school's Catholic Identity

General Comments

- Gospel of Joy resounds in school
- Uncompromising Catholicity
- Genuine Catholic in understanding and identity
- Co-responsibility - church, school, family
- Schools are a valuable resource of evangelizing the culture
- Referred to Pope Francis' document on schools
  - Seek new and unconventional forms of education to conform to the needs of the people
  - Bold and creative in rethinking evangelization in the educational community
  - Practical means of assessing a school's Catholic identity

**Five Marks of a Catholic School's Identity**

- Understanding of the human person
- A Catholic view of the world - A Catholic spirit
- Curriculum integration of vision of faith into what is taught and what is learned
- Gospel witness
- Spirituality of Communion

*Presentation 2* focused on practical means of assessing a school's Catholic identity

- Public commitment to Catholicity

Mission Statement

Is it visible?

Do all stakeholders know it?

- Integration of Vision of Faith in the Curriculum  
Do teachers have knowledge of tradition in order to pass it on?

Does spiritual/moral/ethical learning take place?  
Does it reflect the Catholic belief that truth can be searched for,  
found and communicated to others?

- Religious Knowledge  
Authentic doctrine and practice is a student's right  
Are religion teachers well formed?  
Are the programs designed to give knowledge about Christ as well as  
an encounter with him?  
Are the teachers zealous and passionate about the Joy of the Gospel?
- Faith Formation Outside the Classroom  
Do the students have an opportunity to go to the Church for prayer  
sessions, Eucharist and Reconciliation?  
Do the students have the opportunities for retreats?  
Does the school reflect the signs and symbols of the changing  
liturgical seasons?  
Is their faith formation for teachers and staff?
- Gospel Witness  
Does the system hire teachers who are doctrinal and moral teachers?  
Do the teachers form quality relationships with the students? ( do the  
teachers know who their students are?)
- Co-Responsibility in Governance  
Bishop's role is pivotal bishops should not be considered an external  
authority  
Are the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders outlined in  
policy?  
Is there a spirituality of communion between all stakeholders?

For those who are interested Archbishop Miller's two talks, they can be found on  
the following website:

<http://www.acsta.ab.ca/archbishop-miller-presentations-from-2014-catholic-education-symposium>

Following the Archbishop's second presentation, I had a brief chat with him,  
explaining that I missed references to groups such as CWL and other church  
groups that have a vested interest in Catholic education. I also mentioned that  
there is a large group of people who may not attend church but also have a  
vested interest as they are baptized Catholic and therefore have a right to vote  
for Catholic trustees. I also mentioned that we are overlooked except when there  
is a threat to Catholic education. It was interesting, as he said he had not  
thought of that and that I was right and these groups should be there.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Judy*