

There have been many letters included in this space that are written in defense of human life, in particular, the lives of the unborn. And while the dignity of each life is certainly the essential Gospel call of our faith, the fight for life does not end with the debate on abortion.

It is our belief that that the quality education provided by our Catholic schools, especially our urban schools, offers the one single opportunity for disadvantaged children to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty and live their lives fully.

As part of the Vibrant Parish Life initiative, many of our urban school and parish leaders are now meeting to determine the most effective and efficient way to provide Catholic education in the city. We have spoken with many of these folks, and understandably they are weary. They are facing continued blight in the city and increasing financial strain.

These are challenging times for these schools. But we also find them to be incredibly exciting, and hopeful. With a resized infrastructure that results from VPL, pastors and principals get a “do-over”, a chance to step back, and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, reinvent how they serve the children who need it the most.

They’ll have to be smarter about how they operate, and they won’t survive on parish or even Diocesan support alone. They will have to build partnerships with businesses, philanthropists, city officials and other community members. Marketing and development will become as essential for running a school as teaching core subjects. For those who embrace these practices, there is no limit to what can be done.

Metro Catholic School is proof. Metro Catholic was formed 22 years ago with the merger of St. Stephen, St. Boniface and St. Michael schools. It was a cluster when we weren’t using that word. At that time, the founding mothers, three Notre Dame Sisters, saw the wisdom in doing things a new way. They restructured the administration and formed a development office when grade schools didn’t know what development was. In the 22 years since, with superb leadership, Metro Catholic has built an endowment, formed an advisory board, grown its enrollment to the largest in the city, and it is now approaching the completion of its first capital campaign.

Today, Metro Catholic has the most diverse population in Cleveland. Its enrollment is close to capacity, and its budget is balanced. With academic scholarships, graduates go on to the finest Catholic High Schools in the area and on to college after that.

Metro Catholic is a great example of what an urban Catholic school presence can be if we reimagine it. With energetic and creative leadership, our schools can be vibrant again, and the lives of our children can truly be changed.

Students today are learning how to solve the problems that we can’t yet anticipate. They will need to be creative, inventive, resourceful thinkers to do so. So too will we if we are to teach them.

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SDG Advisors works with Catholic K-12 schools to help them understand their finances, market for enrollment, raise more money, build better boards and plan for their future.
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