

## The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme in U.S. Catholic High Schools: An Answer to the Church's Call to Global Solidarity

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*The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme provides an academically challenging curriculum that when combined with moral and religious formation prepares graduates of Catholic secondary schools to succeed in college and to live as Christian citizens in an interconnected global society. Although the financial cost of the program is high, this paper will argue that the adoption of the International Baccalaureate Diploma increases academic rigor at the high school level and serves as an effective marketing tool to attract students to Catholic schools. Using examples from several Catholic high schools, this paper will also examine how the International Baccalaureate can help schools deepen the realization of Catholic identity and provide educators with an ordered, humanities-based curriculum that although secular in origin draws on Catholic intellectual tradition.*

In a 2007 address to the Mid-Atlantic Catholic Schools Consortium, Timothy Cook of Creighton University challenged Catholic school leaders to accentuate the global and international aspect of their Catholic identity. He said that as the Church is universal, Catholic schools should be leading the country in global and international education, and that American Catholic educators had not capitalized on this part of their identity. By promoting global awareness and solidarity, multicultural perspectives, and international relationships, Catholic schools could make a unique contribution to America and to the world (Cook, 2008). Cook was making reference to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' 1997 document entitled *Called to Global Solidarity* in which the bishops wrote:

At a time of dramatic global changes and challenges, Catholics in the United States face special responsibilities and opportunities. We are members of a universal church that transcends national boundaries and calls us to live in solidarity and justice with the peoples of the world. As Catholics and Americans we are uniquely called to global solidarity. (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997, p. 1)

The bishops point out that the universality of the Church is one of “God’s greatest gifts,” but that the Church’s international institutions, programs, and special Sunday collections “have not yet awakened a true sense of solidarity among many Catholics in the United States,” and that Catholics “need to be more Catholic and less parochial” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997, p. 1).

Assessing the role that Catholic education should play in this regard, the bishops argued in support of “Catholic educators who consistently integrate contemporary international concerns into their curricula and programs such as geography, history, and science classes,” while pointing out that “too many educational programs still neglect or ignore the global dimensions of our Catholic calling” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997, p. 9). They “urge all Catholic educators to share the Church’s teaching on the global dimensions of our social mission more intentionally, more explicitly, and more creatively,” encouraging “the incorporation of the call to global solidarity into our schools, religious education programs, sacramental preparation, and Christian initiation programs” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997, p. 9).

Although a secular program, the International Baccalaureate (IB) is providing Catholic schools a framework to meet the bishops’ challenge when combined with formation in faith and morals and a sacramental worldview. The IB presents Catholic schools with an option for a high-quality, academically challenging curriculum that can prepare Catholic school graduates of the 21st century to bring Christ to an increasingly interconnected global society. This paper will argue that the adoption of the IB can effectively increase academic rigor at the high school level and serve as a potential marketing tool to attract students to Catholic schools. Using examples from several Catholic high schools, this paper will also examine how the IB can help schools to deepen the realization of Catholic identity and provide them with an ordered, humanities-based curriculum that draws on the Catholic tradition of education as it helps young people develop what Pope John Paul II (1987) in his encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* called “the Virtue of Solidarity” (1987, sec. 38, para. 6).

### International Baccalaureate

The IB has become an important vehicle for curriculum reform in American education, offering programs of the highest academic rigor while creating a disposition toward international or intercultural understanding in students

who complete its course of study. The IB offers three academic programs: the Diploma Programme, the Middle Years Programme, and the Primary Years Programme. The Diploma Programme originated from the practical need for international schools to create an examination that would be accepted in many countries with diverse standards for university admission, and from a philosophical desire to counter prevailing systems of nationalist education (Leach, 1969). More recently, the IB Programme has redefined its emphasis to include intercultural understanding in response to emerging globalization (Wells, 2011). This essay will concentrate on the Diploma Programme (referred to hereafter as IBDP), the oldest and most recognized of the three IB offerings.

The IBDP requires students to take six academic subjects over a 2-year period: a first language, a second language, individuals and societies (history and social studies), experimental sciences, mathematics and computer science, and a course in the arts or an additional course in one of the other five areas. In Catholic high schools the additional course is generally a theology or religious education course. Students must take examinations in all mandatory subjects. These exams are graded externally by a body of 4,000 examiners worldwide with the central IB assessment office reviewing and weighting all final grades. Internal assessment by the schools takes place in some subjects but it is always moderated by the IB. There are three compulsory components of the IBDP: an extended essay of 4,000 words on a topic drawn from one of the six required subjects; a 150-hour requirement for creative and physical activity or service called Creativity, Action, and Service (CAS); and a course entitled Theory of Knowledge, which requires students to reflect critically on different ways of knowing and to consider the role that knowledge plays in a global society. The goal in each of these compulsory components is to create a balance between academic knowledge and reflection on that academic knowledge. While it is possible for students to take individual IB courses for credit, a school will only be granted status as an IB World School if the school agrees to offer the entire program, and the school only retains that status so long as there are students enrolled in the full IBDP (White, 2010).

The most important IB learning outcome is related to international or intercultural understanding. The IB mission statement is quite explicit about this goal. It reads:

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To

this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment. These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2002).

The IB has translated the mission statement into a set of 10 learning outcomes that constitute the IB learner profile. This profile defines what an IB student should become, what teachers should model and demonstrate, and what the school's administration, staff, and board should model. The 10 outcomes include students who are: inquirers; knowledgeable; thinkers; communicators; principled; open minded; caring; risk takers; balanced; and, reflective (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2009). The learner profile booklet describes how each of these characteristics should be actualized in the school. It is the realization of these outcomes that constitutes the overall learning objective—intercultural mindedness. These outcomes are to be integrated into every course and every extracurricular activity sponsored by the school. Prior to approval as an IB World School, a school must engage the services of a consultant and undertake a rigorous self-study. After becoming an IB school, it must engage in both internal and external reviews to ensure its fidelity to the IB mission and student learning outcomes (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2010a; Varner, 2009).

### **The IBDP and Humanist Education**

The IB curriculum is not a radical innovation. Cambridge (2010), applying the ideas of Bernstein (2000) to the IB claimed that A.D.C. Peterson and the other educators who designed the IBDP sought to create a “retrospective pedagogical identity,” and that Peterson’s goal was to return to and improve upon the state of British secondary education before the post second world war reforms that led to increasing specialization among young students. The humanities are at the core of the IBDP. Peterson, the first director general of the IB and head of the education department at Oxford believed that international understanding would result from the development of the student’s moral and aesthetic qualities through the study of history, literature, and languages. He wrote:

There is a long Arnoldian tradition of using the teaching of literature and history as vehicles for the development of the moral and aesthetic judgment. Montaigne wrote of the good teacher that he “should not impress upon his pupil the date of the destruction of Carthage so much as the morals and behaviour of Hannibal and Scipio; nor where Marcellus died so much as why it was unworthy of his duty that he died there.” (Peterson, 1987, p. 201)

The IB math and science curricula is similar in academic rigor to Advanced Placement curricula, but the way IB separates itself from virtually every other curriculum is its interdisciplinary framework that integrates humanities across all subjects (Tarc, 2009).

The IBDP curricula resemble some traditional Catholic curricula in several important ways. In the sixteenth century, the Jesuits designed the *Ratio Studiorum* (1599), which described school governance, teacher training and supervision, and pedagogical methods, but most importantly it was an arrangement of subjects creating a sequence of study that led the student through literature, history, mathematics, and the sciences to culminate with courses that help the student to organize this information (Padberg, 2000). In the *Ratio*, philosophy and theology provide the organizing framework for the curriculum; in the IBDP, the Theory of Knowledge course performs this function.

Like the early *Ratio*, the IB seeks to prepare young people for engagement with people who on the surface might appear to be very different from themselves. The basis of the *Ratio* was an in-depth study of classical pagan authors, which had the effect of encouraging an outward-looking Christian humanism (O'Malley, 2008). Seventeenth and eighteenth century Jesuit missionaries brought a highly advanced anthropological perspective to their missions, and found a similar goodness in non-Christian peoples in Asia and the Americas to that which they had encountered in the pagan classics they read in Jesuit secondary schools (Modras, 2004; O'Malley, 2008). For the founders of the IB, the study of history and the social sciences (today called Individuals and Societies) represented what the pagan classics represented to Jesuit schools in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; it was through the study of history that young people would come to appreciate, respect, and accept people different from themselves, and the designers of the IBDP believed that the prerequisite to world peace was the replacement of nationalist history with comparative or world history in schools (Leach, 1969; Peterson, 1987).

The IB's concentration on teaching history regionally forces students to

view history from the perspective of one's immediate and regional neighbors as well as that of their own nation (Godsey, 1990). The idea is to teach history and the social sciences through multiple and often conflicting perspectives to foster intercultural empathy and understanding (Walker, 2004). Gellar (2002) argues that Western societies increasingly measure the success of globalization in economic terms rather than the encouragement of understanding, empathy, and sharing. Students must, therefore, learn how to bring an ethical sense to a globalized market. Tarc (2009) wrote that one of the challenges facing the IB is to develop an appropriate set of values or consciousness to prepare students to participate in a globalized world with new problems. As a result, fostering students' understanding of sociology, economics, and business ethics might perform the task that history did in the early decades of the IB.

### **The IB and the Reinvigoration of the Humanities in Catholic Schools**

As Catholic schools grew and flourished in the United States their primary purpose was to catechize and to protect the young from proselytism and the perceived Protestant perversion of faith and morals (Denig & Dosen, 2009). Although the humanities were still the center of the curriculum, there was little in this system to encourage the type of outward-looking Christian humanism characteristic of the sixteenth and seventeenth century Jesuit schools. After Vatican II, the mission of Catholic schools changed as catechesis became instruction in faith and morals with an emphasis on evangelization, community, and social justice (Bryk, 1996; Denig & Dosen, 2009). At the same time, even classical Catholic schools were de-emphasizing many of the subjects and courses that characterized a classical humanist education (Loftus, 1984; McKevitt, 2008). Increasingly, Catholic schools followed the path of public schools in narrowing their curricula to focus on math and science in response to No Child Left Behind (Ravitch, 2010). This is evident in the 2005 strategic plan for Chicago's Catholic schools that prioritized the math and science curricula before any work was done in developing new curricula in English, history, social studies, and fine arts (Archdiocese of Chicago, 2005).

Challenging this trend, many educators, researchers, and policymakers are urging secondary schools to develop curricula that encompass the skills and knowledge students will need to be successful in the twenty-first century. According to Howard Gardner (2006), for instance, students will need to understand the global system, think analytically and creatively within academic disciplines, and be prepared to address problems and issues that transcend tra-

ditional disciplinary boundaries, like AIDS, immigration, and climate change. Furthermore, students must have knowledge and respect for their own cultural traditions, while possessing the ability to adopt hybrid or blended identities capable of thinking, working, and playing across cultural boundaries.

These dispositions are entirely in line with the tradition of the humanities as handed down to us through the Catholic intellectual and educational tradition. The humanities develop moral goodness, devotion to truth, and a disposition to act for the common good. Historically, the study of languages, poetry, history, rhetoric and logic, along with mathematics and science “opened the mind, sharpened wits, deepened human sympathy,” and “developed clarity of thought and force in expressing it” (Boston College Jesuit Community, 2008, p. 41). The humanities “gave students an adroitness of mind in meeting new questions, and laid a foundation from which to explore the more important questions they would come to later in their studies” (Boston College Jesuit Community, 2008, p. 41). The IBDP provides a curricular framework for Catholic schools to ensure academic rigor in all six subjects and provides a humanistic perspective to the study of math and science as students consider the origins and the uses of knowledge in every subject (Bastian, 2008).

### **The IB and the Compulsory Core Components in Catholic Schools**

Thompson (1998) describes the IB compulsory core requirements of Creativity, Arts, and Service (CAS), the 4,000 word extended essay, and the Theory of Knowledge course as the IB’s “interstitial curriculum” (p. 276). It is in these areas that the broader learning outcomes of international or intercultural understanding, empathy, and compassion are developed and the content and skills learned in the subject areas are connected and integrated. Catholic educators should be able to identify with this notion of an interstitial curriculum; it is what visitors to Catholic schools often describe when they remark on the intangible difference in atmosphere and culture that they feel when they enter a Catholic school (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993). It stems from the fact that while theology or religion is a core academic subject, there is an integration of moral and religious principles across the entire curriculum and school community. The incarnational and sacramental nature of Catholicism means that in a good school, *everything* is Catholic; a “secular” curriculum is a philosophical impossibility (Groome, 1996). The conjunction of the interstitial curriculum of the IB with the interstitial curriculum of the Catholic high school creates an ordered, systematic, and powerful academic and social experience.

The IBDP's requirement for service is in line with the broader mission of many Catholic high schools. The interstices between Catholicism and the IBDP service requirement are in the spirit in which students do their service, and in the ways in which the school helps the students to process these experiences. To fulfill the CAS requirement students may participate in extracurricular athletics, musical, theatrical, or visual arts activities. The service requirement may be filled by performing some sort of service defined as "an unpaid and voluntary exchange that has a learning benefit for the student" (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2010b, p. 3). Emphasis is placed on CAS as a way for the student to gain self-knowledge through initiating, performing, and reflecting on athletic, artistic, and service activities. The student is to reflect upon the differences between experiential learning and classroom learning, and the school is asked to determine (rather than formally assess) that the student has achieved eight learning outcomes, among which are self-awareness, willingness to undertake challenges, to plan and initiate activities, to work collaboratively, to persevere, to address issues of global importance, to develop new skills, and to consider the ethical implications of one's actions (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2010b).

Students in Catholic high schools might discover that some forms of service that are entirely appropriate for their school are not in line with the IB's acceptable list of service activities. The CAS Guide is very explicit with regard to what religious activities can or cannot count as service. Specifically, the IBDP includes the provision that "religious devotion, and any activity that can be interpreted as proselytizing, does not count as CAS" (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2010b, p. 15). However, work done by a religious group in the community may count as CAS. In order to meet the learning outcome asking students to initiate activities on their own, the IB says that "service (even of a secular nature) that takes place entirely within a religious community can at best only partially meet the aims and learning outcomes of CAS, so there would need to be evidence from students' other activities that all the required outcomes had been met" (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2010b, p. 15).

The Theory of Knowledge course assists the student in organizing and connecting the various ways through which knowledge is developed, and it provides students the tools for intellectual discernment (Bastian, 2008). The Theory of Knowledge course is not simply a course in epistemology, but is most concerned with the construction and the uses of knowledge and ways of knowing. Mackenzie (2000) wrote that the course creates attitudes or disposi-

tions that build upon academic skills to create states of character in the Aristotelian sense of the term. As students develop the habit of always trying to see knowledge in its broader context they begin to see themselves in a broader context as well. At its best, the Theory of Knowledge course creates habits, attitudes, and dispositions that allow young adults to reason (and therefore to live) well, helping the young person to assume a “state of character” that will be reflected in lifelong habits (Mackenzie, 2000). Conscious of their place in the discourse or narrative of their own culture, students come to understand that some of the things that they considered obvious and natural are elements of their own cultural traditions, and that others in the world have different narratives (Mackenzie, 2000).

In many Catholic schools, Theory of Knowledge is taught by a member of the theology department. At Notre Dame Prep in Michigan the course is taught by the Marist president of the school (Olszamowski, 2010). At St. Theodore Guerin High School in Indiana, an important added element of the Theory of Knowledge course is training in apologetics. In the school’s IB handbook we find that the focus of Theory of Knowledge is “to investigate knowledge, knowledge claims, faith, reason, logic and the assumptions of philosophical and personal systems of thought from a Roman Catholic perspective,” while one of the goals for the Theory of Knowledge course is that students will learn “critical reflection of the sources and bases of knowledge in various systems of thought and belief and how they relate to Roman Catholic epistemology” (St. Theodore Guerin Catholic High School, 2009, p. 18). Another goal is that students “will understand the difference between a relativistic perspective and the truth of Catholic faith” (St. Theodore Guerin Catholic High School, 2009, p. 18).

Few schools articulate the connections between Theory of Knowledge and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition as clearly as Guerin does. Catholic Memorial in Waukesha, Wisconsin, also adds the extra prism of viewing knowledge through Catholic tradition (Catholic Memorial, 2010). St. Scholastica’s, Santa Margarita, and Notre Dame de la Baie house the IB philosophy class in the religion department. At Notre Dame de la Baie, IB philosophy can count as a senior religion elective (Notre Dame de la Baie, 2011). In the hands of a skillful teacher, the Theory of Knowledge course could also demonstrate the impact of the Catholic sacramental, incarnational worldview by examining how faith impacts our understanding of history, science, art, and literature.

### **Growth of the IB as an Instrument of Reform in U.S. Public Schools**

The IB has experienced tremendous growth in U.S. public schools since the 1980s, little of which has anything to do with increasing international or intercultural understanding. Instead, the growth was caused by the desire to improve academic standards in response to the federal report *A Nation at Risk* (1983), and has continued in response to further federal mandates such as No Child Left Behind (Bunnell, 2009). Spahn (2001) determined that 70% of American public schools that have adopted the IBDP did so in order to meet parental and political pressure for higher academic standards. Globalization trends in the 1990s led many stakeholders to believe the IB was a glossier option for advanced placement programs (Gehring, 2001; Tarc, 2009). Since 2003, when the Bush administration first made Title I funds available for urban districts offering the IB program, poor city systems have begun to avail themselves of this opportunity. In addition, Title II teacher training funds are often used to offset the cost of startup and teacher training. Other federal funding schemes such as the Advanced Placement Initiative, the Magnet Schools Assistance Program, and the Smaller Learning Communities grant programs have been used by districts offering IB programs (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2008a). Some states have begun to direct funds to districts offering the IB (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2008b).

There have been several public school districts that have had major public disputes about adopting the IB program. Concerned parents and conservative politicians have attacked IB for what they see as its anti-American, anti-Christian, and globalist one-world agenda (Bunnell, 2009). False claims that the IB is a creature of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) generally accompany these protests. Many of the criticisms echo the attacks that people made on Catholic institutions a few generations ago—that the IB fosters loyalty to a foreign entity and that it seeks to undermine American liberty in order to place the United States under the domination of a foreign, supranational agency (Cohen Walker, 2005). It is the IB history program, with its emphasis on creating internationally minded students through the comparative study of history that is at the heart of the criticisms. Conservative advocate Jill Cohen Walker of the New Frontier Coalition criticized the IB for what she saw as efforts to make American children citizens of the world. In 2005 she criticized an address by then IB director general George Walker, stating:

He admitted that ‘the program remains committed to changing children’s values so they think globally, rather than in parochial national terms from their own country’s viewpoint.’ That means they want to change the way your children think and brainwash them with their values. American patriotism is now considered parochial, which means narrow-minded, close-minded, or unsophisticated. (Cohen Walker, 2005, p. 2)

### **Growth of the IB in Catholic High Schools**

The experience of a Catholic high school adopting the IB is qualitatively different than adoption in a public school. These differences are related to costs and funding, marketing, and the connections that can be made between the goals of the IB program and the mission of many Catholic high schools. Program growth among Catholic schools has been much slower than among public schools; a search of the IB database revealed that in July, 2011 there were only 28 U.S. Catholic high schools offering the IB Diploma (International Baccalaureate Organization, “Find an IB School,” 2011). While public schools have access to government funding, most Catholic schools are at a distinct disadvantage in terms of funding and maintaining a new IB program, as starting the IBDP is an expensive proposition. There is a \$14,000 application fee, an IB coordinator must be hired, and every teacher teaching an IB course must be trained in the content, pedagogy, and assessment appropriate to that course. Depending on where this training takes place, the cost can be in excess of \$1,400 per teacher (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2008a). At the United World College of the American West in Montezuma, New Mexico, for example, the cost for a week of training in the summer of 2010 was \$1,089 (United World College, 2009). There are also thousands of dollars in annual school fees, as well as the cost of individual examinations (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2008b).

In order for the IB to have a transformative impact on the culture of a school, many teachers have to be trained in the program. In most schools, around half of a school’s faculty must be trained. Cathedral High School in Indianapolis has over 1,200 students, and with 70 teachers trained out of a total faculty of 96 they have sent more teachers for IB training than any other U.S. Catholic school (Cathedral High School, 2010). More typical is St. Dominic’s Academy in Jersey City, which has sent 15 out of its 38 teachers for training (St. Dominic Academy, 2010), while the Academy of the Holy Cross, in the DC

suburbs of Maryland trained 27 out of its 56 teachers before a single IB class was taught (Academy of the Holy Cross, 2010).

### Marketing the IB in Catholic High Schools

Whitehead (2005) examined how the IB was marketed in private schools in Australia. She looked at secular, Anglican, and Lutheran private schools and concluded that many of those schools advertised the IB in order to sell social advantage rather than social justice. The IB was deployed as a commodity that increased the schools' advantage in the education marketplace rather than as a curriculum with socially just ideals. Brochures, websites, admissions pamphlets, and other advertising materials prominently displayed the blue "IB World School" logo, but seemed to be promoting the school more than the IB. Also examining Australian schools, Bagnall (1997) wrote that IB students "were interested in attaining global cultural capital that would help put them ahead of the 'pack'" (p. 142), and he determined that student and parental engagement with the IB curriculum was more of a market relationship than a commitment to its socially just ideals.

Most U.S. Catholic schools that offer the IB are quite up front about the advantages of the program, with websites advertising that the IB is a "prestigious" program that can help with admission to select colleges and can lead to advanced placement or college credit (Academy of the Holy Cross, 2010; Archbishop Walsh Academy, 2011; Bishop Amat High School, 2011; Cathedral High School, 2010; St. Dominic Academy, 2010; St. Scholastica Academy, 2010; Trinity High School, 2010a). Notre Dame Prep/Marist Academy in Michigan has even incorporated its recognition as an IB World School into its mission statement:

Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy provides its diverse student body a Catholic and internationally recognized college-preparatory experience of lasting value. We affirm our Marist mission to "Work with God to form Christian People, Upright Citizens and Academic Scholars," (Mission Statement, para. 1).

Unlike public schools, where conservatives are sensitive to what they perceive as attacks on American patriotism, conservative Catholics who express concern about potential dangers in Catholic schools tend to focus on threats to the faith rather than to American ideals. One of the criticisms that conservative observ-

ers have had about Catholic schools in recent years has been a perception that since Vatican II the bishops have largely abandoned Catholic schools to the vagaries of market forces and a weak economy, which continue to apply pressure to the schools to compromise their Catholic identity and curriculum in order to maintain enrollments by focusing more on academic rigor and college preparation than faith formation (Carlin, 2003; O’Keefe, 2008; Varacalli, 2005). Of course, striving for academic excellence is not incompatible with Catholic virtue or fidelity to the Church’s teaching. Saroki and Levenick (2009), writing in a guide for donors produced by the Philanthropy Roundtable, urge potential donors to insist on the development of Catholic schools that are not only completely orthodox but are also performance driven. The IB program can deliver on both counts; it provides for internal and external review of academic excellence while providing students with a global Catholic perspective.

Building “perspective” as a learning outcome is one area where the differences between IB implementation in public and Catholic schools stand out. Hayden and Wong (1997) noted that the “effects” of the IB program depended upon the milieu in which it was taught. Bunnell (2010) determined that despite using common syllabi, teacher training, and assessments, the IB is now producing two classes of diploma graduates, those who have been educated with an “agenda for global peace” and those who have been given an “agenda for global business” (p. 351). It may be significant that the current IB director general, Jeff Beard, is an American businessman with no prior experience in education (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2008c). Notre Dame/Marist president Leon Olszamowski, SM (2010) acknowledged that because public and Catholic schools have different philosophical foundations, criticisms of the IB based upon what happens in public schools are not valid for Catholic schools, and particularly not for his school. If a Catholic school is faithful to its mission, Olszamowski believes that the IB will be experienced differently than it will in a public or even another Catholic school. “*In nuce*,” Olszamowski wrote, “the IB curriculum is about *a method of teaching and about a profile of the kind of student/citizen we are trying to create*” (p. 4, emphasis in original).

### The IBDP and Catholic Mission

According to Joseph Marino (2007), a former principal of Xaverian High School in Brooklyn, American Catholic schools that adopt the IB generally discover that the program fits with the school’s mission and that students are

better prepared to engage the world from a Catholic perspective. In response to school closing and consolidations in Brooklyn, he wrote that “the future of our schools depends certainly on creative financial planning and reorganization,” ensuring that “our mission is placed up front, reinforced in the minds and hearts of our administrators, teachers, non-instructional staff, parents and students” (Marino, 2007, p. 33). The IB is one of those creative responses, but it is not brought in simply to fill seats. Reflecting on 10 years of administering the program at Xaverian, Marino concluded that

It has become increasingly clear to me that our primary mission (our call to promote the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to create faith-filled communities and to prepare our students to live lives of faith and concern in the secular world) is supported and given a clear academic and social framework by the mission of International Baccalaureate. The IB is not simply a challenging academic program, but a call to its students to expand their awareness of and to develop a genuine concern for their communities, both local and global. (p. 33)

Catholic schools are part of a tradition of preparing young people to participate as members of a collective whole. Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) contrast the Catholic notion of education for the common good with the secular idea of education for the public good. Jesuit David Hollenbach (1996) contrasts the Protestant idea of extreme individuality with the Catholic tradition’s long commitment to the idea of human interdependence in community, and noted that the preservation of the distinct Catholic identity of the Catholic school and the service of the common good are intimately related and are by no means exclusive of one another. As a result, marketing and mission are often connected in Catholic IB schools. Rocky Domingo (2007), religion department chair at Bishop Amat High School in California, points out that one of the goals of Catholic secondary education is for students to develop a holistic, noncompartmentalized view of the world through the lens of faith and reason. He sees the IB as a way to develop these characteristics.

The IB Program itself is not faith-based. However, it integrates beautifully with the goals of Catholic education. While seeking to produce informed, faith-filled graduates, Catholic educators also want them to be critical thinkers looking at the world with an eye for change, not complacency. (Domingo, 2007, para. 9)

Looking at state schools in the United Kingdom, McGee (2003) notes that many schools adopt the IB in order to “carve out a distinctive identity” (p. 5) rather than for intrinsically ideological reasons. That is not the case in Catholic schools, where the development of a distinctive identity does not preclude intrinsic ideology. That very phrase, “distinctive identity” appears several times in the Six Year Strategic Plan of Notre Dame Prep and Marist Academy in Michigan as the school pledges its long-range support for the IB program (2008). Notre Dame/Marist has the distinction of being the only Catholic school in the United States to offer all three IB programs. The distinctiveness that the IB gives the school is not simply a successful marketing device, but is reflective of the mission of the school.

Schools like Notre Dame/Marist that are attuned to the call of John Paul II and the American bishops to explore and embrace global solidarity are often seeking to encourage international mindedness in their students and alumni, dispositions that the IB only enhances. As a K-12 IB school, Notre Dame/Marist is seeing a deeper realization of its commitment to educate Christians for global service, while at the same time the school is providing itself with an academic program that distinguishes Notre Dame/Marist from most of the other high schools in the diocese (Joseph Hindaling, SM, personal communication, July 22, 2011). Another example is found at the Forest Ridge School of the Sacred Heart in Belleville, Washington, which offers a “Women as Global Leaders Program” that is committed to building tangible, relevant leadership skills in students by offering them opportunities both inside and outside the classroom “to engage with curiosity and to learn from cultures outside of her own” (Forest Ridge School of the Sacred Heart, 2011, “Global Education,” para. 1). One aspect of the Women as Leaders Program is the Peace and Reconciliation Program, a yearlong course designed to teach peace building and conflict resolution through cultural immersion, dialogue, and personal reflection. An optional 10-day visit to Israel and the West Bank is offered at the end of the course.

Despite the criticism of some conservative advocates, a number of Catholic IB schools regularly appear on the annual “Catholic High School Honor Roll,” a list of 50 schools compiled by the conservative Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty. The list acknowledges “those schools that maintain high academic standards, uphold their Catholic identities, and prepare their students to actively engage the world” (Catholic High School Honor Roll, 2009, “Fact Sheet”). These schools join a list that is usually comprised of diocesan schools, a few Opus Dei schools, and many independent Catholic schools

founded by lay people in the past few decades in order to combat “lagging academic standards, pressure to dilute Church teachings, and the culture of moral relativism” that challenge Catholic schools today (Catholic High School Honor Roll, 2009, “The Need,” para. 1). The Acton Institute sees no problem with the IB; it treats it as a high-quality advanced placement program when assessing the academic quality of candidate schools, and it believes that the IB certainly meets the Honor Roll’s requirement that schools prepare students for an active engagement with the world (Kara Eagle, Acton Institute; personal communication, July 20, 2011).

The IB has made much deeper inroads into Catholic schools in other parts of the world, particularly in Central and South America. Sixteen of the 24 Central and South American secondary schools associated with Opus Dei offer the IBDP (International Baccalaureate Organization, “Find a School,” 2011). While this figure might surprise, John Allen (2005) describes a “striking plurality of schools and intellectual approaches” (p. 111) within Opus Dei’s worldwide educational apostolate. The recognition of the utility of an education for international mindedness is consistent with Opus Dei’s international presence, the international mobility of many of its schools’ graduates, and with Opus Dei’s insistence on acculturation for members who relocate from one country to another (Coverdale, 2009). Many Latin American secondary students matriculate at universities in North America or in Europe, and the IB Diploma is the best means to secure admission from abroad.

### **The IB in Urban Catholic High Schools**

While the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has spoken loudly in favor of school choice (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), the development of school choice options has meant that Catholic schools in urban areas are facing an increasingly crowded educational marketplace. Diane Ravitch (2010), who originally supported charter schools and school choice, has done an about face and has recently written that school choice has threatened Catholic as well as public schools in urban areas as educational options continue to expand. Despite the cost, there is a growing perception that the IB can help save struggling Catholic urban high schools, and many dioceses now include a resolution to explore IB in their strategic plans.

Within the past several years, Chicago, Baltimore, and Richmond have all determined to explore an IB high school as either a marketing strategy, an academic improvement strategy, or both (Archdiocese of Baltimore, 2010a, 2010b;

Archdiocese of Chicago, 2005; Diocese of Richmond, 2007). In San Antonio, where a particularly painful process of closures and consolidations has just taken place, 11 schools in the city's poorest neighborhoods have been aligned under one network to consolidate purchasing and resource allocation, improve academic rigor, and provide tuition assistance (Archdiocese of San Antonio, 2010). The plan involves a pilot project in which three K-8 elementary schools and St. Gerard High School will explore using the IB from the Primary Years Program through the Diploma. "This pilot project will establish a foundation for our cradle-to-college concept of education," said Auxiliary Bishop Oscar Cantú (LeCoste-Caputo, 2010, para. 10).

Trinity in River Forest (Chicago) Illinois adopted the IB in 1994 and St. Dominic's Academy in Jersey City has been an IB school since 2007. Through the 1980s Trinity was suffering from declining enrollments and the perception that academic quality was lacking (Sr. Michelle Germanson, O.P., personal communication, July 22, 2010). When the nearby boys' school went coeducational in 1992, enrollments dropped further and the future of the school was in doubt. The school applied for IB status in 1993, and began to offer the DP the next year. Today, enrollment has recovered all of the losses of the 1980s. Forty-four percent of the student body comes from urban feeder schools, while the remaining 56% come from over 35 of the surrounding suburbs (Trinity HS, "Profile," 2010b; Sr. Michelle Germanson, O.P., personal communication, July 22, 2010). Although only about 20 students complete the full IBDP each year, 55% of the student body takes IB courses for certificates, and Diploma students regularly exceed the passing rate for the United States and for the world (Trinity HS, "International Baccalaureate," 2010).

Both these schools, moreover, see the IBDP as strengthening their Catholic mission. Trinity's president, Sr. Michelle Germanson, OP, said that the school board almost instantly recognized the Dominican charism of intellectual inquiry and service in the IB curriculum (Sr. Michelle Germanson, OP, personal communication, July 22, 2010). St. Dominic's principal Deborah A. Egan acknowledges that the philosophy and practice of the IB complements the school's existing mission statement to support academic excellence and the empowerment of women in a globalized world through an educational experience rooted in diversity and Catholic values (St. Dominic Academy, 2010).

### **The IB and Organized Religion**

Institutionally, IB appears to be ambivalent toward organized religion, while

individuals within the organization are openly opposed to religion. Former director general George Walker saw the IB as a Western, secular humanist curriculum. He wrote:

A humanist education is founded upon a belief in the essential goodness of humankind; the learner is invited to challenge the teacher in the pursuit of truth; God is confined to a small part of the curriculum and may be excluded completely. The message is clear: nothing is beyond the reach of human beings if they are willing to stand on their own feet. The choice is theirs. For me, all this is very familiar and comfortable but there are many societies that have not “learned to say no to God.” (Walker, 2002, p. 51)

IB's ambivalence toward religion is reflected in the fact that the topic of religion is largely ignored in the curriculum. Of the three texts currently in print for the Theory of Knowledge course, two make little mention of religion (Bastian, 2008; Dombrowski, Rotenberg, & Bick, 2007); while the third (van de Lagemaat, 2011) has one chapter on religious knowledge. The Aristotelian proofs for the existence of God are discussed (without any mention of Aristotle or Avicenna, Maimonides, or Aquinas, who adapted these proofs for Islam, Judaism, and Christianity). Each proof is challenged with a passage from David Hume. Van de Lagemaat does not suggest that there are degrees of knowing, nor does he suggest that there are varieties of religious knowledge; and while he is fair to Aquinas in his description of the relationship between faith and reason, the basic structure of the chapter is to present one religious assertion after another and then counter each with an atheist assertion, without once pointing out that the author's assumption is a form of dualism: religion or atheism (van de Lagemaat, 2011).

Haywood (2011) points out that religion and spirituality are the missing elements of a truly international education. He examined several years' of workshop topics at the European Council of International Schools' conference, which, although not sponsored by IB, is one of the world's largest meetings of schools offering the IB. One out of 200 workshop topics dealt with religion or spirituality. He asserts that there is a “secular mindset that tends towards hegemony across the world of international education” (Haywood, 2011, p. 18). He sees religion dismissed by many teachers because they believe that “faith is essentially irrational and it is hard to reconcile with an educational process geared to learning about the world through rational inquiry and the articulate

justification of one's ideas in terms of logical reasoning processes" (Haywood, 2011, p. 20). According to Haywood, teachers who did not have a religious upbringing often, "feel ill-equipped to handle a dialogue with a student or a parent who has a particularly strong personal commitment or identity deriving from their faith" (Haywood, 2011, p. 21).

Beginning in 2011 the IB is offering a new course in World Religions. There is a certain safety and detachment in the study of comparative religion in a World Religions course, but allowing students "to bring their personal beliefs into their classrooms, using them as the basis to justify value systems, moral codes, or the promotion of certain social policies is dangerous territory that most teachers prefer to leave alone" (Haywood, 2011, p. 20). Of course, in Catholic schools these areas are at the core of the learning experience.

The issue for religious schools is how to nurture the development of a religious identity while at the same time preparing students for participation in a pluralist world. Rabbi Marc Baker, head of school at Gann Academy, a Jewish day school in Massachusetts, has written about the relationships between pluralism and religious particularism in schools. He maintains that the cultivation of individual religious purposefulness does not rely on the building of rigid intellectual, theological, and social boundaries. Rather, the awareness of the "other" contributes in essential ways to the development of the student's religious identity (Baker, 2008). Baker sees that a key element for educators in religious schools is to teach students how to engage with the other.

To engage implies a willingness to take seriously the claim that the Other might make on me; it means taking the Other seriously and taking responsibility for the encounter by critically and respectfully analyzing this claim, while being humble enough to challenge and question my own assumptions and beliefs. Engagement demands respect for the dignity of the Other (whether text, person, or idea) and requires practice, patience, and humility. (Baker, 2008, p. 30)

To Baker, a strong pluralism depends on people developing a strong particularism. Pluralism, as he envisions it, is about active engagement between people who have different commitments, beliefs, backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and worldviews. This active engagement is most rich when each participant's particular perspective is well-formed and strong, so the person enters the pluralistic engagement or environment with a considerable degree of self-confidence and passion (Marc Baker, personal communication, July 25, 2011).

Hollenbach (1996) would appear to concur with Baker. The preservation of Catholic identity and the commitment to a pluralism directed to the common good, Hollenbach writes, are allies and not adversaries. At the same time that society fragments into smaller and smaller autonomous groups the forces of globalization are forcing people into contact with people further from their homes than ever before. Fidelity to the Catholic tradition of the common good calls Catholics to participate creatively in the effort to remake society into something more closely resembling a unified whole. In describing the unique contributions that Catholic education can make to the common good, Hollenbach points out that economic, social, or racial injustice can be most effectively challenged within a moral framework that:

Expands the understanding of community beyond that of homogeneous groups of the like minded or those who are similarly situated economically. Such a challenge will be dependent on the development of an understanding of the common good that reaches beyond the boundaries of existing groups. (Hollenbach, 1996, p. 91)

This sense of working for the common good, of developing a strong sense of one's own place in the world and then working from that place to improve the lot of all comes very close to what Pope John Paul II meant when he described the fruits of solidarity. Solidarity, he wrote,

helps us to see the "other"—whether a person, people or nation—not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our "neighbor," a "helper" (cf. Gen 2:18-20), to be made a sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God. (1987, sec. 39 para. 5)

The IB can help Catholic schools to make this contribution to the global common good by sending forth graduates who are not only committed emotionally to justice but who are developing the intellectual capability for understanding that can lead to true empathy. Although he was speaking of national, secular characteristics, former IB director general Roger Peel appears to have echoed the sentiments of John Paul, Fr. Hollenbach, and Rabbi Baker when he said that,

The honesty of the IB stems from the fact that we require all students to relate first to their own national identity, their own language, literature, history and cultural heritage, no matter where in the world this may be. Beyond that we ask that they identify with the corresponding traditions of others. It is not expected that they adopt alien points of view merely that they are exposed to them and encouraged to respond intelligently. The end result, we hope, is a more compassionate population, a welcome manifestation of national diversity within an international framework of tolerant respect. Ideally, at the end of the IB experience, students should know themselves better than when they started while acknowledging that others can be right in being different. (International Baccalaureate Organization, 1988)

### Conclusion

In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) Pope John Paul II wrote that the development of a sense of interdependence among the peoples of the world was a sign of the growing potential to overcome injustices related to the unevenness of economic and social development around the world if only the people of the world could develop a sense of solidarity with one another. This essay has argued that the IBDP can provide Catholic schools with a curriculum that prepares people to bring an informed Christian voice to questions of world interdependence. Pope John Paul wrote that interdependence was

A system determining relationships in the contemporary world, in its economic, cultural, political and religious elements, and [should be] accepted as a moral category. When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a “virtue,” is solidarity. This then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all. (1987, sec. 38, para. 6)

With its emphasis on developing international mindedness through academic study and personal service, students who have completed the IBDP should be well on their way to going beyond feeling vague compassion or shallow distress

for the injustices in the world, as they should have begun to develop the habit of thinking with the “other.” There is room for further research into creating instruments that might quantify the development of informed and active empathy among students in Catholic schools who complete the IBDP, looking at specific areas in the curriculum where these dispositions are developed. Related to this, Catholic schools that offer the IB can be more deliberate and transparent in connecting their school missions and learning objectives to the challenges set before us by the Church’s magisterium to create a more just and equitable world. The IB presents schools with an opportunity to connect the Church’s rich tradition of social justice with a curriculum specifically designed to create international understanding. Research into the conscious curricular connections between the Church’s teaching and the habits and dispositions developed in IB schools could be helpful not only to IB schools but could help other Catholic schools to meet the challenge to lead the country in international education.

Those Catholic high schools that offer the IB must go to great expense to create and to operate the program. Dioceses and individual schools might benefit from examining the long-range costs and benefits of the IBDP and its impact on student achievement as well as on enrollment, student retention, and the overall health of those schools that adopt the IBDP, which could lead to schools that wish to adopt the IB having access to data about the potential transformation that the IB might bring to a school that could then be used in seeking external funding for program development.

Finally, the IBDP provides a way for Catholic high schools to reclaim their traditional roots in the humanities without giving up the current trend toward excellence in math and the sciences. In *College Knowledge* (2008), Conley asserts that the difficulty that many students have in college can be traced directly to the lack of coherence in the secondary school curriculum. Courses often exist in isolation, and the sequence of study is often not designed so that students are challenged by a series of texts and learning activities that build upon one another and become increasingly difficult. The scope and sequence of study in most high schools is not constructed around the development of habits of inquiry that college study requires. Conley suggests that schools should begin curriculum review with a picture of what a student will look like at graduation in terms of what will prepare him or her for university study, and then design learning experiences that will lead to that end. The Jesuit Secondary Education Association’s *Profile of the Graduate of a Jesuit High School at Graduation* (Jesuit Secondary Education Association, 1981) captures

the intellectual and religious dispositions and habits that a graduate of a Jesuit school should be coming to possess as he or she completes secondary school studies. The IB learner profile also articulates what skills and dispositions a graduate should possess, and it is central to the definition of what it means to be internationally minded (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2009). The development by Catholic IB high schools of a profile of an internationally minded Catholic graduate rooted in the social teaching of the Church would create a rich opportunity for schools to share ideas and that could prove beneficial to each school. Such a profile might also prove beneficial to the broader Catholic educational community as it examines the ways in which Catholic schools can teach the Church's message on global solidarity more effectively.

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