

CARDINAL: PRAYER ISN'T EXTRA IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Stresses Child's Right to Know and Love God

KILKENNY, Ireland, MAY 7, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Teaching prayer in Catholic schools is not an extra feature, but rather an essential part of the institutions, which children have a right to receive, said Cardinal Sean Brady.

The archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland stated this today at a conference on the theme, "Catholic Schools: Envisioning a Future," near Kilkenny. The conference was organized by the Diocese of Ossory and will end Saturday.

He invited his listeners to renew their commitment to "respecting and promoting the right of children in our schools to be led and formed in authentic worship of God in the Catholic tradition."

"This is not some optional extra," the prelate asserted. "Children and their parents have a right to expect a Catholic school to provide children with a formation in prayer and worship."

He appealed to the leaders of the educational institutions "reflect seriously and with commitment on this essential part of our shared duty of stewardship."

"A Catholic school without worship and prayer is a contradiction in terms," the cardinal said. "It is also a school which is failing in its fundamental obligation to parents and children."

As people of faith, he said, "we should particularly cherish" the "right of a child to know and to love God."

The whole truth

"Children also have a right to know God's love for them," Cardinal Brady added.

He continued: "They have a right to receive the truth and life which God offers them in the Sacred Scriptures, in the sacraments and in prayer.

"If we really believe that Jesus Christ reveals the whole truth about the human person, then children have a right to receive that truth.

"If we really believe that the message of Jesus Christ is the key to a better world and the source of our eternal hope, then children have a right to be part of a school community in which Jesus and his message are lived, respected and promoted."

"Children also have a right to worship God as part of their daily activity," the prelate affirmed. "They have a right to be trained and formed in the worship and prayer of the faith community to which they belong."

"We have received a sacred trust from Jesus Christ," he said, to "go out and teach all nations."

The cardinal also underlined the "sacred trust given to us by parents" who "wish to have their children educated in a school community defined and inspired by Catholic faith and values on a daily basis."

"Parents, whatever their denominational background, have a right to have their children educated in accordance with their religious convictions," he said, a right that "is recognised in international instruments of human rights, including the European Convention on Human Rights."

"Catholic schools have a duty to respond to that right conscientiously," Cardinal Brady pointed out. "We all have a duty to ensure the Catholic ethos and identity is a key feature of the life and mission of our schools."

He explained: "This is an identity which is specifically characterised by respect, love and justice for all."

"It is an ethos based on the vision of a peaceful world and a selfless concern for others modelled on Jesus in the Gospels."

The prelate expressed the hope that in the Catholic schools, "the same attention will always be given to excellence in worship as is given to excellence in academic or sporting performances."

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