

The Institute For Catholic Liberal Education
Catholic Schools Textbook Project

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PRESS RELEASE

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NEW CATHOLIC TEXTBOOK HITS MARK

The **first new Catholic history textbook published in 35 years** will be in classrooms this Fall. The book, *All Ye Lands: World Cultures and Geography*, for 6th graders, is one in a series of five new Catholic history textbooks that are already in production for 5th through 9th grades. A second phase of Catholic history textbooks will be released for 1st through 4th grades beginning in 2003. Produced by the Los Angeles-based Catholic Schools Textbook Project, the new textbooks will boast the latest technology in colorful graphics and illustration techniques, cover all the standard themes and subjects and will be well written. They also will include vignettes about saints from different time periods and well-researched historical data; all calculated to capture the mind and imagination of today's visually driven, technically savvy children.

Seven U.S. bishops serve on the project's episcopal advisory board, and the team of history scholars, researchers and writers work under the direction of Rollin A. Lasseter, PhD. Dr. Lasseter is a noted Catholic University of Dallas professor who has taught history at the university and high school levels for more than 35 years, and who has served as an educational consultant and curriculum director for several secondary schools.

"This project is long overdue," says Douglas Alexander, executive director of the Catholic Schools Textbook Project, noting that for the past 35 years Catholic schools have been forced to use secular history textbooks because the older Catholic history textbooks are increasingly out of date.

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"Books from the '30s and '50s were written to help Catholic students face a certain set of challenges. Students today face a different set of challenges: they need freshly written books to help them," Alexander says, citing as an example the canonization of hundreds of new saints by Pope John Paul II who are strong role models for the children of our modern world. Such contemporary saints include St. Maximilian Kolbe, who resisted the Nazis; St. Edith Stein, a Jewish convert to the Faith; and St. Faustina, the great saint of Divine Mercy.

Alexander also cites the powerful impact of a few of the many events of the past 35 years that have contributed to the new challenges for today's Catholic students. These events include the moon landings, the ending of the Vietnam War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Internet, the Persian Gulf War, the rise of radical Islam, the worldwide travels of Pope John Paul II, his apostolic letters and encyclicals, the launching of World Youth Days that have drawn up to four million young people at a time, the devastating effects of 30 years of legalized abortion in the U.S., and the saintly examples of Padre Pio and Mother Teresa.

"We have a whole generation of Catholic children who are simply unaware of their own reality. A genuine understanding of history, especially Catholic history, gives students a stable and reliable context in which to view their own lives and current world events," explains Alexander, "This should be regarded as a necessary part of any curriculum for Catholic students. "

Marvin R. O'Connell, professor of History emeritus at Notre Dame University agrees. "Christianity is a historical phenomenon," he asserts, "and our Catholic faith is the precious gift that has been handed down to us over the generations. History is essential to our faith. And our faith is essential to any history worthy of the name."

"The books usually studied now by Catholic students teach them the Church was backward and tyrannical until the Second Vatican Council came along," notes prolific Catholic author and professor James Hitchcock, Ph.D. "As a result, Catholic students do not cherish those who have gone before them or identify with the sacrifices made by previous generations to evangelize and build up the Church."

"Even worse," adds Alexander, "many of today's popular secular history textbooks contain blatant factual errors, some of which directly involve the Church." Among the errors contained in currently used textbooks in Catholic schools are the following examples:

(1) In *WORLD HISTORY: Continuity and Change*, published by Holt, 1999, on page 404, it

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reads "Copernicus...accepted the idea that the planets moved in perfect circles around the earth." But the truth is that Copernicus, a Polish university professor and a Catholic priest, argued that planets move around the Sun, not around the earth.

(2) In a textbook discussion regarding the first university founded on the North American continent, *WORLD HISTORY: Connections to Today* (Prentice, 1999), page 399, reads: "...Harvard, the first North American university, was founded in 1636." But the truth is that the Roman Catholic University of Mexico was the first North American university, founded 85 years earlier, in 1551.

(3) Regarding the Pope and the organization of the Catholic Church, the textbook *ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS* (Harcourt Brace, 2000), page 360, states: "As Christianity grew, it became more organized. Each group chose a single leader called a bishop. Some people believe Peter served as an early bishop. Over time, the role of the bishop of Rome grew into the position of pope, the leader of all bishops." Of course, the truth is that the Catholic Church was centrally organized by Christ from the very beginning, when He trained the 12 apostles and other disciples, as recorded in the New Testament and in the annals of early Jewish historians. Likewise, the primacy of Peter as head of the Church that Christ founded is evident from the beginning, both from Scripture and from the earliest writings of the Church Fathers and writers. St. Ignatius, for example, who was the bishop of Antioch and who was martyred in the 2nd Century, recorded much information about the structure of the Church at that time, its hierarchy and liturgical practices.

"Catholic schools around the country have expressed great interest in the project," says Alexander." They are hungry for good, Catholic, up-to-date history textbooks. The bishops, school principals, teachers and parents who already know about the Catholic Schools Textbook Project are eagerly awaiting the books' publication! We are producing them as fast as we can, given our dependence on the generosity of donors who believe in this project." San Francisco-based Ignatius Press has already contracted to publish the first five volumes.

For more information about the Catholic Schools Textbook Project, or to learn how you can help, call 805/9987-9033, or check out its website at www.catholictextbookproject.com

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