

Catholic Influence on the United
States:
Past, Present, and Future

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The Catholic Church has had a positive influence on culture of the United States in the past because of the rich history of Catholic schools. Catholic schools go back as far as 1606 in St. Augustine, Florida. During the 1770's, Franciscan missionaries established schools in what is now California. When the United States became a country, Catholic schools proliferated with the help of various religious orders. As the number of schools grew, so did the Catholic influence on the United States.

The Catholic Church continues its positive influence in the present by educating young Americans, both Catholic and non-Catholic. Catholic schools provide special opportunities to their students. For me, it was the National Geographic Bee. Sr. Elizabeth O'Neil, R.S.M., saw that my talents pointed toward geography and worked for countless hours just to teach me and enter me in competitions. We made it all the way to nationals because of her selfless work. This dedication of teacher to student is typical of Catholic schools. Catholic school teachers go the extra mile to unlock their student's potential. In religion classes, the most skilled teachers make sure basic Catholic ideals are understood. This ensures that both the values of the Church and the word of God are available to everyone. Therefore, even if the person disagrees with them, they understand the Church's viewpoint on key issues and, more importantly the reasons behind the viewpoint.

The Church is especially strong in community service. St. Vincent's, a Catholic charity named after St. Vincent de Paul, is vital in aiding needy Americans, Catholic or not. St. Vincent's provides food for the hungry, clothes and blankets to the homeless, and

hospital service to the needy to name a few of the many services. This charity organization is a positive influence because it leads by example and demonstrates for the general public the core values of Catholicism. The Church was publicly recognized for its influence by President George W. Bush on 7 April 2006. Bush stated that, "The Catholic Church rejects such a pessimistic view of human nature, and offers a vision of human freedom and dignity rooted in the same self-evident truths of America's founding." (Catholic World News). It is truly remarkable that the president of a nation founded on the separation of church and state and not of the faith would recognize one particular faith, Catholicism, for its influence. This speaks volumes about how integral the Catholic faith is in the greater American culture.

The Catholic Church's positive influence will be continued far into the future. As of February 2008, our faith is the biggest single denomination in the country comprising 24% of Americans (Boston Globe). The article also reported that large numbers of Catholics were leaving the faith and that immigrants were keeping the faith steady. However, this drop in numbers is a miniscule blip in the long history of the Church. Anything created by God cannot be destroyed and our Church will rebound and become an even more diverse and cohesive group than at the present time. With numbers on our side, Catholics can change American politics; issues that hurt or compromise human life won't make it past Catholic voters united against them. This will only have positive effects on the American people because by shooting down these issues early, the United States will lead the world into a time of respect and prowess.

Works Cited

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Words of Welcome

Pope Benedict, you are the leader of the Catholic faith, which positively influences so many places. The leader of such a proactive movement is naturally imbued and enriched with its primary values, enabling them to continue the tradition they are upholding. Your visit to our country will encourage others to take look at Catholicism, not characterize it as just another religion. American Catholics will come to see you, speak to you, and take strength from you. You will allow us to continue to practice our faith with strength, becoming role models in our communities. In conclusion, there is only one thing to say: Expectata, Sanctus Abbas. (We eagerly await you, Holy Father)