

## New High School Reports: 2004, 2006, 2007

Here are several of the High School reports published in our bulletin over the last few years.

**FEBRUARY 2007 High School Project Status:** The committee continues to evaluate different land proposals in the Conejo Valley area. Land values have fluctuated recently so there are new opportunities coming forward all the time. The group continues to be optimistic that this project will go forward. The Cardinal also continues his search for a religious order to help staff the school.

**JULY 2006 New High School Project Status:** In January of 2005, Cardinal Mahony asked the Legion of Christ religious order of priests to allow other religious communities that were already operating high schools in the Archdiocese the chance to bid on staffing our new high school. While this delay seriously derailed the already established land acquisition and fundraising plans for this approximately 50 million dollar project, the local committee of lay people who began the high school project accepted his decision. (Committee listed at [stpaschal.org](http://stpaschal.org)) The Cardinal took the lead in this search effort; however, after eighteen months no other religious group has accepted his offer. The lay committee continues its search for property suitable for the new high school and continues discussions with the Cardinal about religious order staffing.

**MAY 2004 New High School**

**FIRST UPDATE:**

by Fr. Dave Heney

Here is some additional information about the high school project, the Legion of Christ religious order, and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

First of all, let me affirm that our new high school is not a St. Paschal Parish or Fr. Dave project. It will be a privately owned and operated Catholic school approved by the Archdiocese in the same manner as Louisville, La Reina, Crespi, and Chaminade. Our progress is closely coordinated with the Cardinal and the Department of Catholic Schools which will ease future accreditation and ensure we truly have a "Catholic" school. As an area pastor with a lot of interest in this project, I have been asked by the Cardinal to help coordinate our efforts with the Archdiocese, but approval for religious orders, curriculum, and other major issues are at the Archdiocesan level.

The Archdiocese has long recognized the demographic need for another Catholic high school in our area, but has waited for some qualified religious order with a good history in education, good prospects for future vocations, and significant local financial support to come forward to help make it happen.

Several groups of interested parents have formed in recent years in various locations, such as Camarillo, Simi Valley, and even several groups here in Thousand Oaks, to build a new school. All are equally welcome by the Archdiocese to present viable plans. Some are still working and I wish them well. Last summer, one local group began to form a plan to acquire land and develop a school with the Legion of Christ, a relatively new religious order. In meeting with them and a few Legion priests already working here, I have come to believe the Legion of Christ fits the requirements of the Archdiocese very well.

There are many reasons why the Legionaries have come to the enthusiastic attention of the people here. Some have known of them for a long time while others met them on retreats they have been leading in our area for a number of years. I first met the Legionaries in Pasadena where they continue to serve today as the Catholic chaplains at Cal Tech. Members of our committee have visited their schools around the country and all of us have done extensive research on them. They are approved and respected by many Catholic bishops around the world. While many seminaries are struggling, their seminaries are thriving with new vocations. They have extensive fund-raising abilities, and education is one of their main priorities.

I have also been impressed at their flexibility in adapting their educational system to our local needs. They are dedicated to forming an affordable, convenient, and academically excellent high school that will work in close cooperation with local parishes and elementary schools. For example, decisions about adding a junior high or even lower grades will be based on future demographic studies of those age groups after the high school is built, and in concert with existing schools.

When conversations with the Archdiocese began last fall, the Cardinal asked if they would be willing to run not only our school, but also take over another school that needs their help. He wrote to the Legion office in December, "I am very interested in the concept of your assuming the leadership of two Catholic high schools at the same time, namely, one in south Ventura County as well as one of our poor inner city schools already in existence." The Legion readily accepted, however, that sudden doubling of their responsibilities also doubled and somewhat slowed the planning process.

On a personal note, I can affirm that they have my fullest confidence for a number of reasons. When I came to St. Paschal's, I promised to serve under the ideals of Openness, Accountability, and Responsibility. I also tend to look for those same qualities in the people I meet or institutions with whom I work.

Although the Legion has many obvious strong points, every Legionary I have met has also been completely open and forthcoming about any problem areas. They have spoken openly and clearly about their schools that have succeeded and schools that have struggled. As regards the accusations from the 1950's against their founder, Fr Marcial Maciel, they were investigated thoroughly and found to be without merit, as is explained quite openly by the Legion itself on their own Web sites, which you can study at [www.legionofchrist.com](http://www.legionofchrist.com), and [www.legionaryfacts.org](http://www.legionaryfacts.org). I have read and recommend Fr. Maciel's autobiography as well, *Christ is My Life*. That kind of direct openness is impressive to me, and rare in the world today.

I am particularly attuned to accountability in the church today. I have seen for myself that the Legion has accountability to a high degree. Every Legionary is responsible to another in an accountable and public chain of command. There is a lot of oversight and supervision. (I believe that is precisely what is needed in the Church and especially priesthood today.)

Most importantly, in studying other religious orders that have recently formed new schools, I have noticed a practice of

putting forth dynamic or talented personalities to lead these projects. The danger is that the project rises or falls with that individual person. The Legion approach is to base the success of a school on an organizational concept and a proven educational system and not on the abilities or talents of an individual person. While individual talent is important, of course, the strength and energy of the organization are more so. I strongly believe that is a healthier, safer, and more reliable approach.

I have also seen for myself that Legion institutions are faithful and accountable to the spirit and direction of the Second Vatican Council. All of their schools are lay administrated and staffed, with one or two priests serving as campus chaplains. They are proud of their overall record around the world and are willing to stand on it. That is being accountable.

Finally, I find that they are responsible in their commitment to carry out the direct mandate they have received from Pope John Paul II to increase their projects throughout the world. While many religious orders are receding or not interested in serving here, they are advancing and committed to our project. When asked by the Cardinal to double their efforts here they readily accepted, even though it doubled their responsibilities.

Credibility is also important to me. I have noticed that they live the Gospel they teach. I have never heard any Legionary say a bad word about anyone, even when faced by people who themselves are not open, accountable, or very responsible. (I need to learn that more myself.) Not only do I see openness, accountability, and responsibility in the Legion organization but have even learned a few things about living the Gospel from them as well.

The Legionaries themselves will have ample opportunity to explain their own approach to education as more conversations about the project continue. They will begin to say some of our parish Masses and in the area as well. Our committee has enjoyed working with them as we lay the groundwork for the new school, and I have enjoyed their sense of humor and joy in ministry when they have been here at St. Paschal's.

Like our committee has done extensively, please feel free to read any and all materials from their website or anywhere else you might find, to meet and speak with them yourself, and then make your own decisions. In the meantime, however, I have asked them to give a brief explanation of the philosophy behind their policy of having co-institutional schools, which is included below.

Legionary rationale for co-institutional education

By Fr. John Bartunek, LC

The very first apostolic endeavor taken on by the Legionaries of Christ when we were only a thirteen-year-old congregation, in 1954, was a school. Since then, we have developed an entire educational system, an academic curriculum, and an international network of educational institutions in accordance with the Catholic Church's extensive and most up-to-date guidelines on Christian education. Currently, this network numbers 154 schools, and includes pre-schools, elementary schools, high schools, and 11 universities spread throughout 13 countries (not including our first university in the USA, the University of Sacramento, which is scheduled to open with a graduate school of education in

2005), as well as post-graduate institutions dedicated to research and teaching in many fields of intellectual, religious, and social concern.

In all, our system is currently educating tens of thousands of students worldwide. As a religious congregation, we share the Holy Father's conviction that education is and always will be a crucial ingredient in the Church's efforts to re-evangelize society and guide its members to meaningful, fulfilling lives.

Co-institutionality is a policy choice we have made based both on our own experience throughout the past sixty years and on the results of various independent studies delving into the intellectual, emotional, and psychological developmental patterns of children, adolescents, and young adults. Numerous studies and experience both show that, in general, between the ages of 9 and 19, boys and girls demonstrate marked differences in the pace at which their reasoning and emotional response capacities develop. Because of this, it is often beneficial for them to dedicate themselves to learning in a largely single-sex environment.

In order to provide this proven learning environment, having two independent single-sex institutions causes various inconveniences, and sometimes even significant strain both on parents and students. For instance, each school has to build its own academic, liturgical, and extracurricular facilities, parents often have to double their driving time because daughters and sons go to schools at a large distance from each other, interaction between boys and girls can be limited to artificial, socially biased situations, etc.

Co-institutionality, wherein boys' and girls' schools exist side by side, sharing a school identity, some facilities, and certain activities, relieves many of these strains and inconveniences, while respecting the different gender development patterns. We are aware that other educational philosophies differ in their cost-benefit analysis of this approach, but our experience has shown that the results of co-institutionality are most often well worth the extra effort involved in making it work.