

Article

Skole and Historia: A Role for the Study of History in a Catholic School of Leisure

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Abstract: Josef Pieper hoped to persuade his contemporaries to rebuild European society into a civilization of leisure. Catholic schools can make themselves into schools of leisure, and the approach they take to the study of history can facilitate this. In this essay, after looking to Pieper's "Leisure, the Basis of Culture" for educational principles that would guide a school of leisure, I explore the educational plan of one Catholic school that has embodied them. The study of history fills the primary integrating and formative role in this school, so I look to The Religious Dimension of Education and contemporary Catholic teachers of history to see how the study of history can be formative while remaining true to the principles of its discipline. Finally, I suggest that studying history from a Catholic perspective performs an important service for the Church as a whole.

Keywords: history; formation; schools; Catholic

But what—someone may well ask—are we to do about it? Well, the considerations in this essay were not meant to give advice and draw up a line of action; they were meant to make men think. (Pieper [1952] 2009, p. 61)

Josef Pieper's "Leisure, the Basis of Culture" did make many think, and even draw up lines of action, at least to the extent that formal education can promote the restoration of a culture of leisure. According to Pieper, the Greeks were the first to assert that leisure is essential for the good life; they even used the word for leisure, *skole*, to describe a place devoted to the formation of the young. The centrality of leisure was self-evident to the Greeks, and was embraced in developed form by the Romans and Medievals, but the idea had become foreign to his contemporaries. If Europe was to save itself from becoming a civilization of workers rather than human beings, they needed to make "an effort of thought" to recover and embrace a sense of leisure.

Our times seem even further removed being able to imagine a life oriented towards serious leisure. Schools in general and Catholic schools in particular can perform an important role in bringing Pieper's vision to reality by making their communities true "skole", immersing their students in a culture of leisure. I will first look at Pieper's essay to discern principles that might guide such a plan of education. Then I will introduce a Catholic school that embodies those principles. Since it uses a classical approach to history as the integrative principle of the curriculum, I will address objections to classical history that would undermine its role in education, and argue for its particular importance for the health of the Church.

1. An Education for Leisure

Pieper did not set out to propose a view of education in *Leisure*, but he did state principles that could shape an educational institution. According to Pieper, modern life is so defined by work that we have great difficulty in conceiving leisure as pre-moderns did. Equally the opposite of busy-ness and idleness, leisure is a "mental and spiritual attitude" of silent and serene openness to reality, prone to celebration of the wonders of life (p. 40). The working man needs to have opportunities for leisure available to him, but more fundamentally Pieper states that he needs to be freed interiorly from the spirit



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of proletarianism, which he defines as “being fettered to the . . . all-embracing process in which things are used for the sake of the public need” (p. 50). Proletarianism (which is found in both socialist and capitalist societies) afflicts people of all economic classes and forms persons who are incapable of “occupying” what little leisure they have (p. 51). In “The Philosophical Act” (published together with “Leisure”), Pieper emphasized the importance of learning to see beyond “the work-a-day world”. A Pieper-esque school must therefore attend to forming the whole person in his capacity to look beyond the material needs that determine his environments, so as to take in the “whole world”. Otherwise it will not really be educating, but merely providing training to some specialized end (p. 35).

Pieper frequently dwells on the importance of the liberal arts in forming people capable of enjoying leisure. Drawing on Aquinas and Newman, he describes the liberal arts as those which make for activities “which are an end in themselves”, that is, are valuable without serving any extrinsic purpose (p. 34). An advanced degree provides no guarantee that its recipient is not in spirit a proletarian. Without the liberal arts, no matter how much money they might go on to make, graduates would likely live and work to serve common physical needs. A doctor, an architect, or a professor can be defined and judged by the way in which they bring about growth in GDP (p. 51).

According to Newman, whom Pieper references several times, one main purpose of a liberal arts education is to be found in the habits of mind it develops:

[It aims] to give the mind clearness, accuracy, precision; to enable it to use words aright, to understand what it says, to conceive justly what it thinks about, to abstract, compare, analyze, divide, define, and reason, correctly. (Newman 1982, p. 248)

Pieper seemed to think that this sort of education would provide complementary development of both the receptive power of *intellectus* as well as the active power of discursive reason. He was especially concerned that the intellect would be developed. The young must be encouraged to see creation as something to be contemplated as well as used. So, perhaps most importantly, education must foster wonder (Pieper [1952] 2009, p. 102). The inability to wonder, or even to tolerate it in others, is a mark of spiritual impoverishment which leads a person to see his environment only through his earthly needs and those of society. According to Pieper, leisure, contemplation, and wonder can only exist if the world has been created by spirit. Consequently, even classical humanism, if worship is kept out of the schola, ceases to educate and becomes mere training, and the academy without worship at its center becomes “sterile, pointless, and unreal,” “an intellectual *trompe l’oeil* [optical illusion]”.

Pieper believed that rebuilding a civilization of leisure presumed embracing the traditions of Western civilization. He introduces his discussion of the liberal arts by stating: “The root problem [concerning a culture of leisure is], are we to build our house in the European tradition?” (p. 34). This has profound implications for a Pieper-esque school. Greco-Roman-Christian civilization should not be considered as one tradition among many, but must be both the formative agent and the contextual goal of education.

In summary, Pieper implicitly suggests that education should be oriented to forming students capable of leisure by teaching them to look for meaning beyond the life of mere work. This will be accomplished by training the receptive and discursive powers of mind through the traditional liberal arts, and being careful to foster the spirit of wonder and contemplation which finds fulfillment in worship.

2. A Pieper-Esque School: St. Jerome Academy

In 2010, St. Jerome Academy, a parochial elementary school in the diocese of Washington, D.C., became the first diocesan school in the United States to re-found itself on the basis of the classical liberal arts. In preparation for this transition, it produced a thorough, 120 page educational plan that has made it a model for a growing number of Catholic schools in the United States and elsewhere. The thoroughness of its Educational Plan (hereafter SJEP) makes it a

great example of what it looks like to fulfill the call of the 1977 document of the Sacred Congregation for Education, *The Catholic School*, to every Catholic school “to review its entire programme of formation, both its content and the methods used, in the light of that vision of the reality from which it draws its inspiration and on which it depends”. ([The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1977](#), n. 28)

The document begins with a statement of its vision, which reveals that the academy aims to produce graduates “capable of leisure”, persons possessing the liberal desires of loving and wondering about what is worthwhile for its own sake, and the liberal arts (“tools”) that will enable them to continue to learn throughout their lives. This is the *raison d’être* for its embracing classical education.

St. Jerome School educates children in the truest and fullest sense by giving them the necessary tools of learning and by fostering wonder and love for all that is genuinely true, good, and beautiful. We emphasize classical learning because we want our students to read well, speak well, and think well and ultimately because truth and beauty are good in themselves and desirable for their own sake. ([St. Jerome Academy 2010](#), p. 6)

True education, the document states, forms the whole person to love the beauty of truth, and so be humble enough to allow himself to be judged by truth. Beauty is mentioned 119 times in the document. One entire section is devoted to the importance of cultivating beauty in every aspect of the school’s life. Pieper (*The Four Cardinal Virtues*) is quoted explicitly at the beginning of this section: “Joseph Pieper has said that in its original sense beauty is—‘the glow of the true and good irradiating from every ordered state of being’” (p. 106).

The document concludes its Vision section with 15 general questions to be used for assessing every aspect of the school’s curriculum and life. “Is it beautiful?” is the first question to be asked. Other questions aim to keep teachers looking for opportunities to develop “what is uniquely human in the student”, and to foster reverence for the mysteries of God, creation, and the human person. John Henry Newman expressed the peace his continuously active mind experienced while facing the mysteries of faith, “Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt.” ([Newman 1908](#), p. 238). In that same spirit, searching and questioning are to be encouraged, but also attention and love, along with a deep respect for the “received wisdom of the Christian tradition”.

The celebration of the liturgy is “the heart of the school’s life”; joyful, wondering, intelligent participation in the liturgy is the ultimate goal of all aspects of the plan. In words that resonate strongly with Pieper,

For in worship we acknowledge the goodness of truth by surrendering to it, offering ourselves in Christ to the Father. And it is in worship, by God’s gracious initiative, that our longing for beauty and truth finds its rest in the mystery of God who is beauty and truth. Contemplation and adoration, prayer and praise are therefore the highest form of knowledge and are foreshadowed by all others ... (p. 108)

In these ways, we can look on St. Jerome Academy as implicitly intending itself to be a “Pieper-esque” school. In fact, St. Jerome’s rebuilding was propelled by some of the same concerns that animated Pieper’s essay. Michael Hanby, associate professor at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family and one of the chief authors of the SJEP, recounted that, as a college professor, he had become convinced of the systemic failure of pre-collegiate education years before becoming involved in rebuilding St. Jerome Academy.

The prevailing vision of education is thoroughly pragmatic and utilitarian. It is all about the acquisition of skills; this is what “preparing for college, career, and life” means in our society. ([Hanby 2015](#), p. 2)

Hanby here references the tagline of the Common Core State Standards Initiative, the result of a nationwide curricular initiative begun in 2009 ([National Governors Association Center for Best Practices 2010](#)). American education, like the American temperament, has always tended towards the pragmatic. This tendency gained a greater economic focus with the passage in 2002 of the No Child Left Behind Act, which tied federal support of local schools to successful progress in standardized test scores. The purpose of the act was to “advance American competitiveness” by ensuring that all schools, especially those serving traditionally underachieving populations, achieved scores deemed proficient on standardized tests ([Klein 2015](#)). While NCLB left the determination of test content to individual states, Common Core proposes national standards in language arts and mathematics, yet its goals are similar: to ensure students are “prepared to succeed in entry-level careers, introductory academic college courses, and workforce training programs.” Although some of the actual standards might fit with a traditional liberal arts education, the Common Core expresses its purposes in ways that call to mind Pieper’s description of the “intellectual worker”: “he, too, is harnessed to the social system and takes his place in the division of labor . . . ; he may be called a specialist, but he is a functionary” ([Pieper \[1952\] 2009](#), pp. 33–34).

The Common Core has been voluntarily adopted by 41 of the 50 states. Many Catholic dioceses have followed suit. In general, Catholic schools in the United States, though politically free to determine their own curricula, have adopted the standards and language of secular schools. “An excellent Catholic school has a clearly articulated, rigorous curriculum aligned with relevant standards, 21st century skills, and Gospel values, implemented through effective instruction.” ([Center for Catholic School Effectiveness 2012](#)). Hanby claims the Common Core makes for schools that fail to inspire a sense of wonder in the young or arouse noble aspirations in them. More importantly, the secular character of these tendencies leaves questions about God, creation, and the Incarnation out of the school, producing a curriculum which is “intellectually empty”.

So when we exclude God and the Church from the curriculum, we both lose sight of the profoundest [sic] achievements of human culture, and we eliminate the very longing after truth that has always compelled people to desire education in the first place. ([Hanby 2015](#), p. 5)

3. History Oriented to Leisure

A striking feature of the SJEP is the central role that history plays in unifying the curriculum. The curricular plan devotes each year to the study of one of the moments in the development of Christian civilization. Over the course of eight years, students cycle twice through years devoted successively to Greek, Roman, medieval, and modern civilizations. Other subject areas (such as literature, music, art, and even mathematics) incorporate components that connect to and deepen the understanding of these civilizations.

The SJEP intends its students not merely to learn about the past, but to become “incorporated into the wisdom of two thousand years of Catholic thought, history, culture, and art” ([St. Jerome Academy 2010](#), p. 6). They should come to see themselves as products and heirs of Western tradition, and realize they share the same fundamental human questions that underlie the tradition. The document presents the history of Western civilization as a coherent story, based on an understanding of humans as created beings, of the human desire for God meeting the desire of God to elevate man in Christ. Hanby claims that this approach to history is “simultaneously lovingly appreciative, sympathetic, and critical” about pre-Christian cultures, showing that they were intrinsically oriented to and prepared for providential transformation in Christ ([Hanby 2015](#), p. 6). Other studies contribute to this “incorporation” by developing aptitudes for attending and understanding and an orientation of love and wonder towards “all that is genuinely true, good, and beautiful.” According to Hanby, the historical sequence together with the supporting work in the rest of the curriculum encourages students to make the great questions of meaning

their own, while proposing objects worthy of love, and showing them that their faith is meant to affect their lives.

The SJEP assumes a classical understanding of history. Historian David Kagan, in his 2005 Jefferson Lecture on the Humanities, summarized and defended the ancient Greek understanding of the historian's task:

These are the missions for the historian: to examine important events of the past with painstaking care and the greatest possible objectivity, to seek a reasoned explanation for them based on the fullest and fairest possible examination of the evidence in order to preserve their memory and to use them to establish such uniformities as may exist in human events, and then to apply the resulting understanding to improve the judgment and wisdom of people who must deal with similar problems in the future. (Kagan 2005)

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, the Congregation for Catholic Education's most detailed account of curricular approaches appropriate to Catholic schools, presents a similar understanding of history. In general, it provides guidance for those ready to provide their students with a curriculum "imbued with a Catholic worldview" (Miller 2006). *The Religious Dimension* explores how each major curricular area should be seen in the light of the school's overall concern with formation under the light of faith. While each discipline's integrity must be maintained, it also must find its role in the integrity of the entire curriculum.

When the document turns to history (*The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education* 1988, nn. 58–60, 76–77), the formative concern manifests itself immediately in the assertion that youth need to develop a "taste for historical truth". The young should encounter history as consisting of serious assertions about the character and causes of past events that can be judged to be true or false, reliable, or dubitable. They should come to realize that criteria exist for determining the reliability of historical claims, and they should care about judging them well. This will teach them to be on their guard, helping them "to realize the need to look critically at texts and curricula which, at times, are imposed by a government or distorted by the ideology of the author" (n. 58).

The taste for truth prepares students to encounter history as it really is—the story, the "drama", of the "monumental struggle" between the good and evil that has come forth from the human heart. Because the central story of history is concerned with good and evil, "the taste for historical truth" necessarily demands moral judgments about historical actions, characters, and societies. The document recognizes that, though disagreements can be easily provoked, sober moral judgments about the complexities of human history are not easily attainable, especially for the young. Teachers must help students to begin to form these judgments, recognizing how frequently good and evil are intertwined in history.

To this end, the teacher should help students to see history as a whole. Looking at the grand picture, they will see the development of civilizations, and learn about progress in such things as economic development, human freedom, and international cooperation. Realizing this can help to offset the disgust that comes from learning about the darker side of human history. (n. 59)

Truth and falsity, goodness and evil, beauty and ugliness—these are proper even to secular history. But, as the document goes on to say, this is not the whole of history, for God is the author of history. The properly religious dimension of history arises when human activities are considered under the light of the "divine history of universal salvation". In a Catholic school, teachers should lead students in reflecting on what we can see of God's salvific work as it has played out in human activity.

4. Reasonable and Meaningful

Is a classical approach to history reasonable today? In my experience, college students, mostly Catholic, encountering the moral, political and religious judgments of authors such as Herodotus, Livy, and Tacitus, instinctively dismiss them as mere bias, even when they

sympathize with their claims. Through their previous education and cultural formation, they seemed to have imbibed the spirit of the research historians, who worked to distance the science of history from its classical progenitors:

Data thus confirmed counted as ‘facts,’ and insistence on facts separated ‘history’ from speculations about the past once thought to be history . . . Sir James Bryce wrote in 1911 that “it is better to be tedious and monotonous and dreary almost up to the verge of unreadability than that our facts should be wrong or that such of them as are right should be smothered under festoons of florid verbiage.”. (Turner 2014, p. 303)

In his 2006 Regensburg address, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of the danger of reducing the power of reason to what is now considered scientific. He suggested that this presented a danger to the study of history among the other liberal disciplines.

Hence the human sciences, such as history, psychology, sociology and philosophy, attempt to conform themselves to this canon of scientificity . . . While we rejoice in the new possibilities open to humanity, we also see the dangers arising from these possibilities and we must ask ourselves how we can overcome them. We will succeed in doing so only if reason and faith come together in a new way, if we overcome the self-imposed limitation of reason to the empirically verifiable, and if we once more disclose its vast horizons. (Benedict XVI 2006, p. 5)

In the spirit of Regensburg, Catholic teachers should help students to see that history, as a narrative of what is fully human, can also be reasonable. Though the religious and ethical dimensions of history lie beyond science, they are not beyond reason. These dimensions fall under reason’s power to form trustworthy opinions. In traditional parlance, opinion names those claims about truth that are reasonable and defensible, but are not completely certain (Aquinas 1970). Room for disagreement remains often due to the complexity of human situations which cannot be completely determined by reason. Yet when a preponderance of reasons support a claim, honest minds should accept it as true.

Today’s students are formed to think very differently about opinions, which they have been trained to distinguish from facts. As one popular website for teachers expresses it, “Facts tell us what happened, and can be proven true or false; opinions are attitudes or judgments that cannot be proven right or wrong (Mac Donnchaidh n.d.).” Fact, according to this distinction, applies to anything that can be verified in such a way that it cannot be disagreed with. Opinion is a name given to claims that can be disagreed with, which are therefore to be considered “personal beliefs” and dependent on “how someone feels about something.” Since almost all moral and religious judgments admit disagreement, it is easy to understand why students encountering such judgments in historical authors will assume they arise from the feelings rather than the reason of the authors, no matter how much evidence might be supplied.

5. Teaching History in a Classical Way

Some contemporary teachers of history have taken up the challenge of showing how history can be taught in a way that is both reasonable and meaningful. Christopher Zehnder, chief editor of the Catholic Schools Textbook Project, emphasizes how the young respond to teachers who understand and love the drama of human success and failure and divine guidance that is the “rollicking good tale” of history.

I emphasize here how the teacher of history should approach his subject, for if he does not understand what history is or feel its beauty and drama, he will not be able to pass on a proper sense of history to his students. (Zehnder 2009)

In a talk delivered at the 2016 National Conference of the Institute for Catholic Liberal Education, Zehnder argued that historians themselves share much in common with creative story-tellers, particularly in their need to look into the hearts of great protagonists. Historians look to tell tales worth telling, though ones that correspond with available evidence.

Great stories depend on logical coherence, on actions that follow as much as circumstance will allow from understandable character traits.

An historian must exercise a faculty we may have thought peculiar to the storyteller: intuition. The historian must contemplate the actions of historical characters and ask himself, “What do these actions suggest about the person’s motives?” What kind of men act in the way, say, Luther acted or Napoleon? The task, of course, is difficult and complex, for the historian cannot rely on facile judgments; for the human character is a very complex thing. (Zehnder 2016)

Thus the historian needs to couple the creative imagination of the novelist with a docility to factual evidence characteristic of the scientist. Zehnder sees this approach implicit in the ancient historians’ practice of putting speeches suitable to the situation into the mouths of historical figures. Love of literature, training in the liberal arts, and proper grounding in philosophy and theology help the historian to accomplish his difficult task of seeing sympathetically yet truthfully into the complex reality of human action.

In order to fulfill their respective tasks, the historian and the storyteller both must be graduates of the same school—the school of experience, of living in the world and encountering and contemplating human beings and their ways.

Historians attentive to the drama of their study face a temptation to cynicism and despair. Zehnder suggests an antidote in “sacred imagination”, one that “assumes that history is the work of a master storyteller whose characters act out the roles assigned to them, but with a self-moving, radical freedom.”

Similar themes are to be found in *History Forgotten and Remembered*, a pithy reflective book in the spirit of Pieper by master teacher Andrew J. Zwerneman. As President of Cana Academy, Zwerneman draws on his history studies at the University of Notre Dame and decades of teaching experience to “study, develop, and teach the best ways for teachers to master their art”. Zwerneman responds to questions he has fielded from teachers of history who have been paralyzed by contemporary controversies and challenges:

How do we stay objective and, at the same time, allow history to shape our students’ vision and responsibility? What can we say in the face of criticism that basically dismisses our culture as corrupt? Is there an approach to history that we can all share? (Zwerneman 2020, pp. 3–4)

Zwerneman describes what he calls “a liberal approach to history,” which he believes can provide answers for teachers and historians who want to see meaning in their work. History studied in a liberal spirit will contribute to the development of the mental and spiritual virtues necessary for living a mature life. Making good decisions for oneself, caring for the good of others, and participating effectively in common efforts tend to follow from personal orientation to what is true and lastingly worthwhile. Truly free persons fruitfully criticize both themselves and others.

Drawing on the ideas of a plethora of honored historians such as Bernard Bailyn and David Kagan, Zwerneman states that history properly taught promotes authentic freedom in students. It fosters in them discerning observation, human sympathy, and a strong sense of shared responsibility. In opposition to those who value history primarily as a tool to bring about contemporary change, Zwerneman asserts that history is first and foremost about getting to know a past that is unrepeatable and different from our present.

First of all, the liberal approach to history is observational. Our study of the past is driven by wonder and the desire to know, to see the past for what it is . . . The study of history is primarily intended to cultivate habits of the mind: wonder, inquiry, discovery, knowledge, and understanding. (Zwerneman 2020, p. 5)

Seeing the past for what it is helps us to see ourselves for what we are. Our horizons on the possibilities of human nature are expanded; we can begin to see that many things we take as “the way things are” are really the result of choice, and only became established through difficult development and great human effort. When advocating for reading old books, CS

Lewis warned that one who only knows the present will be blind to whatever might be faulty but pervasive cultural assumptions. His advice also underscores one of the values of historical study.

None of us can fully escape this blindness, but we shall certainly increase it, and weaken our guard against it, if we read only modern books. Where they are true they will give us truths which we half knew already. Where they are false they will aggravate the error with which we are already dangerously ill. The only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds. (Lewis [1944] 1993, p. 5)

Zwerneman argues that observation demands and fosters humility, and puts us in a good position to evaluate what we have observed. Students of history move from careful observation to judgment about what is good and bad, admirable and contemptible. Knowing both the past and themselves better leads to a sympathetic stance toward the past. Zwerneman teaches that history is properly “sympathetic, not judgmental . . . The broader meaning of sympathy is to share an affinity for others and for the full range of human experience” (Zwerneman 2020, p. 6). Human suffering and evil must be remembered, but “history is not, as it is often reduced to, chiefly the recollection of grievances. Rather the primacy lies with what is good in our existence . . . ” (p. 7). In this spirit, history classes might provide a great opportunity for reminding students of St. Paul’s exhortation to love: “Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude . . . It does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right.”

When teachers develop in their students a respectful understanding of the past, one capable of enduring in their memories, Zwerneman believes they have accomplished much towards grounding a strong sense of shared responsibility in them:

If understanding is well established by the study of history, and if the goodness of our existence is held sympathetically in our public memory, then our shared responsibility emerges chiefly as a matter of preserving and improving the order of things (p. 7).

History can encourage hopeful action in the present by revealing enduring changes that deliberate action has brought about. Because of this, students of history can have hope for the future, seeing that meaningful change can be achieved. Though evil and failure abound, history is not, as Macbeth would have it, “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” Yet history also chastens any utopian idealism, and provides materials for the development of practical wisdom.

Zwerneman follows Bernard Bailyn in distinguishing but relating history and memory. In a sense, history is objective and dispassionate, but it abides in the memory primarily to the extent that what it presents seems worthy of being remembered. Filling the memory with stories worth remembering is one of the great tasks of history. Memory is not an inert storehouse that can be opened and closed at will. What is in our memories erupts into the present and colors our expectations for the future.

6. History and Civilization

As we saw, Pieper’s hope for a cultural recovery of leisure rested on the presupposition of an acceptance of Western traditions. He would likely approve of St. Jerome Academy’s goal “to incorporate our students into the wisdom of two thousand years of Catholic thought, history, culture, and arts.” (St. Jerome Academy 2010, p. 1). In the light of both the modern reverence of individualism and current emphasis on cultural diversity, Catholic educators might be concerned to embrace this goal so explicitly. However, much is lost for schools without a commitment to a cultural center. *The Catholic School’s* definition of a school raises the question of whether formative education can even occur without such a commitment:

A school [is] a place of integral formation by means of a systematic and critical assimilation of culture. A school is, therefore, a privileged place in which,

through a living encounter with a cultural inheritance, integral formation occurs. (*The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education* 1977, n. 26)

A cultural inheritance belongs to a people. History, though not properly related to an individual's past, provides narrative structures necessary for public identity.

History is the chief recollection of a society's past. As public memory, it collects what we know of ourselves as a society plus the continuity of our existence across time . . . The culture we hold in common affords us shared experiences and a shared memory: national elections, public spectacle in liturgy, sports matches, parades, festivals . . . ; language, manners, and customs. (*Zwerneman* 2020, p. 52)

Zwerneman warns that only through public memory can a unified people exist. Shannon and Blum, writing under the influence of Alisdair MacIntyre, concur:

The historian's craft . . . can play a significant role in the service of the common good. For we hold that healthy communities, that is, communities constituted by living traditions and perpetuating themselves for future generations, to be communities sustained by narrative. (*Shannon and Blum* 2014, p. 5)

When a common past and its meaning is forgotten, a people easily devolves into fragmented and competing interest groups often deeply divided by different views of justice. In the *City of God*, Augustine insists that in a world of sin a people cannot be held together by justice alone but only by having a common object of love (*Augustine* 1998, p. 950). Classic authors, historical and political, agree that public memory is essential to maintaining that love (*Seeley* 2013, 2018). Facing the ultimate fragmentation of civil war, Abraham Lincoln ended his first inaugural address in 1861 with a plea for the American people to remember its past:

I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

As "privileged places of integral formation", all schools need to consider the ramifications for common life of their history sequences. Are they contributing to or detracting from the formation of a people? This is not an easy question to answer, in our times of increasing ethnic diversity within national communities and an authentic desire for greater human community outside of them, compounded by the respect for individual autonomy natural to democratic societies. But they must be faced.

Catholic schools as Catholic bear this burden in a particular way. Catholic Christianity as incarnational is and must be historical; as ecclesial, it is and must be societal; as universal, it embraces persons from every people; as sacramental, it respects while elevating what is natural. While rejoicing in the riches that each separate culture brings to the whole body, we must also ensure as far as possible that the public memory of the Church lives in each of its members.

7. Conclusions

Catholic educators convinced by Pieper to make leisure the basis of their culture would profit by careful reading and discussion of St. Jerome Academy's educational plan and by considering in particular the character of the study of history that fosters a Catholic spirit of leisure. The formal teaching of history in Catholic schools can help to reestablish the moral and social foundations for personal, social, and ecclesial flourishing. By presenting compelling narratives of actions worth remembering, history courses embrace their role in forming the spirits and inspiring the imaginations of the young. By presenting history both objectively and sympathetically, they prepare the students for a lifetime of prudent and insightful judgment, and give them hope that they can contribute to a better future. By fulfilling their role as passing on Catholic memory, they strengthen the living faith, hope,

and love Catholics need ever more pressingly in an increasingly secular and individualistic age. By opening windows to view God's ever-present providence, they develop the contemplative spirit ready to celebrate His works that Pieper believed is the real source of leisure.

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