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Dusting off the Devil - Catholic schools Then and Now

OREGON, Wis.— The Devil is dead ... or at least semi-retired in most Catholic schools. Ever since Vatican II caused earth-shaking changes in the Catholic Church, most Catholic schools have never been the same.

In researching her new book, *Catholic Schools Then and Now*, journalist Mary Reardon found little vestige of fire and brimstone religion, threats of the devil and hell, or nuns in habit or their famed harsh discipline.

There appears to be a “villain void” in today’s Catholic schools, which have had to shift from their original mission of protecting the Faith in a hostile Protestant country. The majority of today’s schools teach the idea of loving everybody.

“Parents who regard the word ‘Catholic’ as a brand name are mistaken,” said Reardon. “Yet test scores remain high and students, parents and teachers find a sense of community in these schools.”

What kind of schools did Reardon find?

- Mercy Montessori Center in Cincinnati, where kids call the principal by her first name; it’s Cathessori to the hilt.
- Catholic Central High School in Grand Rapids, where religion teacher, Bob Kennedy, has his students sampling the works of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine.
- St. Matthias in Milwaukee, where they don’t fear lecturing and rote learning.
- St. Francis Academy in Baltimore, the oldest Roman Catholic school founded for African American children in the U.S. where they successfully teach at-risk students. And they’re trying to get their founder declared a saint.
- Bishop Blanchett High School in Seattle, located in the home of one of the biggest defense contractors, Boeing, responded to the 9/11 attacks by taking a pro-peace stance on the “just war” theory.
- St. Pius X Academy in Cincinnati, a traditionalist school that Mel Gibson could love. Latin reigns!
- Chicago’s Cristo Rey Jesuit High School supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Its Latino students work in the Loop providing a financing model for Catholic schools nationwide.

Reardon’s book is being released for Catholic Schools Week, Jan. 30 through Feb. 5, 2005. The book includes a 100-question School Compatibility List which is designed to help parents choose a Catholic school

For a review copy of *Catholic Schools Then and Now* contact **Mary Lou Santovec** at Badger Books at 800.928.2372 or at marylou@badgerbooks.com.

To set up media interviews or for a copy of the School Compatibility List, contact Maureen Walsh, Summit Press Syndicate, 866-669-3228.

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