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## **EDUCATING FOR LIFE: A SPIRITUAL VISION FOR EVERY TEACHER AND PARENT**

THOMAS H. GROOME. THOMAS MORE PRESS, 1998.

*Reviewed by Marcella Fox*

A gentleman noticed the book I was holding, *Educating for Life* by Thomas Groome. "Why don't they just teach the kids to read, write, and fix computers? That'll educate 'em for life," he commented. The question, obviously rhetorical, prompted thoughts about the public's demand for educational reform, higher SAT scores, and competitive technical skills and impatience with piecemeal solutions to complex educational problems. In his book, Groome takes on the educational establishment and sets forth a bold spiritual vision that renews the foundations of why and how we educate. With ecumenical awareness, Groome draws upon the essence of Catholic Christianity and its rich educational tradition to portray an educational system that has universal appeal.

Groome begins his book by describing its inspiration, his visit to a Catholic school in Pakistan with a population of 95% Muslim students and faculty. To his amazement, this school maintained a distinctive Catholic atmosphere. He observed the humanizing curriculum and determined that rooted deeply within Catholic philosophy and identity lies the formula for educating for life.

Despite Groome's broad ambition, *Educating for Life* is an essential text for Catholic educators. His rich background in theology and philosophy gives substance to his bold undertaking. Building upon the work of Langdon Gilkey, a Protestant theologian who wrote in the 1960s about the distinguishing features of post-Vatican II Catholicism, Groome presents Gilkey's five themes of Catholicism plus three of his own to frame the vision and provide structure for his book. The eight themes are positive anthropology; a conviction about the sacramentality of life; an emphasis on relationship and community; a commitment to history and tradition; an appreciation of a wis-

dom rationality; seeking the holiness of life; working for justice and social values; and finally, a hospitality for all.

Groome's style is readable and at times poetic. He begins each chapter with a personal story that illustrates the theme; uses theological, philosophical, and educational scholarship to support this thesis; and concludes the chapter with praxis. Readers might be tempted to page to this section first because the suggestions are so fresh and practical, but shouldn't deprive themselves of the richness of a master writer who makes the abstract relevant and the mystical concrete.

*Educating for Life* is a book that demands discussion. It would therefore be appropriate for faculties to use it as a tool to generate professional discourse. The text's accompanying handbook is a positive addition which promotes reflective activity.

*Educating for Life* is a comprehensive, lucid, and useful commentary on the rich tradition of Catholic education. Enjoy it and share the vision.

Editor's note: Langdon Gilkey is the author of *Religion and the Scientific Future: Reflections on Myth, Science, and Theology*; *Catholicism Confronts Modernity: A Protestant View*; and *Society and the Sacred: Toward a Theology of Culture in Decline*.

*Marcella Fox is chair of the Religion Department at Carondelet High School, Concord, CA, and an adjunct professor in the Institute for Catholic Educational Leadership, University of San Francisco.*

## **A CALL TO REFLECTION: A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO CATHOLIC IDENTITY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**

GINI SHIMABUKURO. NATIONAL CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION, 1998.

*Reviewed by Elaine M. Schuster*

**A** major challenge for Catholic school leaders is the ongoing formation of teachers in these unique Christian educational communities. The majority of teachers are well-educated, highly qualified, lay persons. The challenge is to assure that these teachers understand the role of educational minister which they accept when they say yes to teaching in a Catholic school. Catholic school teachers are both educational professionals and ministers called to the teaching ministry of Jesus.

Dr. Gini Shimabukuro presents a valuable book which can be used by Catholic school central office personnel, principals, teachers, or professors in departments of education. This guide to Catholic identity provides a rich

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