



## *Catholic Schools As Role Models*

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<http://faithinmemphis.com/2011/03/03/catholic-schools-as-role-models/>

Memphis city voters will go to the polls Tuesday to decide whether to transfer administration of the Memphis City School System to the Shelby County School System. What are the ethical and moral considerations here? How should our faith inform our vote?

In both of our previous questions of the week I've directly addressed the school system crisis, leaving little mystery about my views. For that reason, I'd like to make an unorthodox suggestion to my fellow Memphians regarding the vote next Tuesday. Don't vote to surrender the MCS charter and don't vote to retain it. It's late in the game, but let's launch a write-in campaign. Let's write-in Dr. Mary McDonald and the Catholic Diocese of Memphis to take over the MCS.

For the record, I'm a Protestant; I have more than a couple doctrinal differences with my Catholic brothers and sisters. Nonetheless, I have great respect for the work of Catholic educators in Memphis. According to their Web site, Memphis Catholic schools are "committed to quality education, in an environment of spiritual, intellectual and moral formation, in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony."

Since 1999, Bishop Terry Steib, with the support of generous donors, has presided over the Jubilee Schools, reopening elementary schools in many of Memphis' most challenging neighborhoods. As a Protestant, I have to admit that our Christian schools are for our kids. As a rule, we don't open branches of our academies in inner-city communities. The Catholic schools take all comers, including many students who haven't succeeded in city schools. In almost every way, they do more with less. No mega-budgets, no overpaid bureaucrats, no self-serving teachers' union, and no flamboyant school board performers. Just solid education for everyone, rooted in love, and regardless of race or social status.

Not a practical suggestion, you say? Not possible because Catholics are, well, Catholic? You're probably right. But our alternatives are bleak. If we surrender the MCS charter we'll create a mega-school district that will be difficult to integrate and more difficult to

operate. If we retain the charter, we can expect more of the same miserable performance, while our county neighbors make their escape. The most vulnerable members of our community—our children—will continue to suffer the most.

Dr. McDonald, Bishop Steib and the Catholic diocese are doing so many things right, not just for their own children but for so many others. Spread the word for next Tuesday: “Write in Mary and Terry”.

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