

THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE:  
GREAT AMERICAN CATHOLICS: PART 8  
EDUCATION, INNOVATION AND THE DEFENSE OF ETERNAL TRUTH  
FR. JOHN RICHARD NEUHAUSS AND THE CARROLS

I. Fr. John Richard Neuhaus demonstrated how the complimentary American virtues of interreligious dialogue, but also a clear adherence to one's principles, and also both a respect for the general public and also deep intellectual thought.

A. John Neuhaus was raised in a Lutheran family of eight in Ontario, Canada and came to the US at the age of 15 to pursue a better job.

1. Born in 1936, he was one of eight children of a Lutheran pastor in Ontario. He was a rather rebellious youth and left a Lutheran high School in Texas after one year. In 1951, he found some investors and bought a gas station in Cisco, Texas.

2. But he gradually became more religious and practicing the Lutheran faith more. And so in 1953, he entered seminary.

3. He entered Concordia Seminary, a Missouri Synod Lutheran seminary, in Illinois and graduated with a B.A. and M.Div. in 1960. In the seminary, he was known as a liberal for promoting ecumenical dialogue.

B. He became a Lutheran pastor and was involved in ecumenical dialogue and civil rights movements.

1. Influential to him were Lutheran theologian Arthur Carl Piepkorn, who believed that Lutheranism is a reform movement, not contrary to Catholicism, but a reform of it, and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, who argued for a conversation between Judaism and Christianity.

2. After a year in graduate school, he asked for an inner city parish and became the pastor of St. John the Baptist Church in Brooklyn, which was a heavily black church in a poor neighborhood. He was still known for giving very intelligent and scholarly sermons, believing that the general public wanted to hear intellectual sermons. The parish went from a few dozen to two thousand members and was able to reopen its school

3. According to a 1988 article in Crisis, he believed in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and made the communion services the central liturgy of the week. He also had liturgical evening prayer and stuck to the liturgical schedule.

4. He was very active in community anti-poverty and integration groups. He was also very involved in the civil rights movement, attending Martin Luther King's famous 1963 speech on the Washington Mass. He considered the movement to be a religious one. He was critical of National Review and William Buckley for failing to support the civil rights legislation, although he was friends with William Buckley, and later had more sympathy with cautions against big government.

5. In addition, with Jesuit priest Daniel Berrigan and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, he founded Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam.

6. He was active in the dialogue between Lutheranism and Catholicism. He believed that it was essential for dialogue that people believe strongly in and be able to articulate their own principles.

C. He was considered a liberal until abortion starting become legal, at which time he turned to more of a defense of traditional Christianity.

1. John Richard Neuhaus was very involved in the prolife movement from 1967 (when abortion started becoming legal) onward, and compared it to the earlier civil rights movement. He warned those who had been in the civil rights movement that they were abandoning their own principles. And he opposed all talk of valuing life by its supposed quality, realizing that every human life is flawed.

2. He was an advisor to President Jimmy Carter and argued with Henry Kissinger about the importance of morality in public life.

3. In 1981, he was involved in the beginning of The Institute on Religion and Democracy, which was founded by Methodist evangelist Edmund Robb and AFL-CIO official David Jessup. The Institute called for churches, especially Protestant ones, to oppose communism and uphold traditional morals. In this role, he was very critical of leftist defenses of communist regimes, including that of Vietnam.

4. In 1984, the Rockford Institute, a conservative think tank founded in 1976 to represent a form of national conservatism, hired John Richard Neuhaus to found its Center for Religion and Society. The Institute publishes the journal *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture*. In 1988, he invited Cardinal Ratzinger to give a talk to the Institute. However, in 1989, he was fired

because of his criticisms that the Institute was taking on racist and anti-Semitic tones.

5. He also argued for the morality of a free market that is still guided by Christian principles.

D. In 1990, John Richard Neuhaus founded First Things, a scholarly ecumenical journal.

1. In 1984, he had already published a classic The Naked Public Square, in which he argued that the First Amendment's prohibition against the government being involved in the establishment of a religion was meant to involve all religions in political discourse, not keep religions from it. He said that to exclude religious principles from the public square and to exclude the notion that God is the source of morality and rights is to dismiss the vast majority of Americans who do believe in God. The New York Times book review listed it as one of the seven most important books since World War II.

2. He said that American public life was being dominated by an elitist group who thought that their atheism or secularism was the superior thought as contrasted to the ignorant religious masses.

3. He would support the thought of Lord John Acton, a nineteenth century British historian and statesman who coined the term "ordered liberty," arguing for the alliance of tradition and liberty. He was also a scholar of the Vatican II Council, and especially emphasized that *Dignitatis Humanae*, its decree on Religious Freedom emphasized that this freedom is based upon the responsibility to pursue truth.

4. In 1990, he then founded First Things and its organization The Institute on Religion and Public Life that brings together writers from the Judeo-Christian tradition on the whole range of subjects in religion, politics, art, music, literature, architecture, etc. It currently has a readership of 30,000 and is centrally influential in Catholic thought. The magazine is at the same time

5. He continued as editor in chief and the writer of the Public Square section of the magazine until his death in 2009.

6. The magazine is often called conservative, and does promote traditional Christianity and Judaism. However, it is also central in the ecumenical dialogue, which is thought of as more liberal.

7. The journal was very willing to be critical of current trends. For example, in 1996, it published a dialogue entitled, “The End of Democracy: The Judicial Usurpation of Politics,” which raised the question of whether judicial power to decide social issues means “we have reached or are reaching the point where conscientious citizens can no longer give moral assent to the existing [U.S.] regime.”

E. In 1990, he also converted to the Catholic Church, seeing the Church as now embodying what Martin Luther wanted.

1. He joined the church in 1990, saying “the original intentions of Lutheranism - to be a reforming movement within the Catholic Church - can now be advanced in full communion with Rome.” In 2002, he wrote an article for First Things in which he said that “I became a Catholic in order to be more fully what I was and who I was as a Lutheran.”
2. Cardinal John O’Connor ordained him a priest in 1991.
3. He would go on to cover many events, including Pope John Paul II’s funeral and the conclave that elected Pope Benedict, for EWTN.
4. He became very influential in Christian and political circles, at one point advising President George W. Bush on the funding of embryonic stem cell research and the protection of marriage. President Bush later said that Fr. Neuhaus ‘helps me articulate religious things.’ In 2005, Time magazine commented on his “under the radar influence” on moral issues.
5. He also authored several books, including Death on a Friday Afternoon and As I Lay Dying, the latter of which pointed out that most people spend most of their lives evading the fact that they will die one day, whereas Christianity is not afraid of that fact.

F. In his personal life, Fr. Neuhaus was both intellectual and personable.

1. According to George Weigel, he was very well read, and was regularly working on some classic work such as Thomas Macauley’s History of England, and even opponents of Christianity such as Edward Gibbon. He also read all of Shakespeare’s plays.
2. But he also enjoyed good popular culture such as mystery novels by Ellis Peters and P.D. James.
3. He continued parish ministry in Immaculate Conception Church in Manhattan, with Mass, confessions and spiritual direction.

G. Fr. Neuhaus died from cancer on January 8, 2009. George Wiegel wrote in an article for Newsweek that he “was arguably the most consequential public theologian since the days of Reinhold Niebuhr and John Courtney Murray.” Fr. Neuhaus combined the American attributes of a dedication to the pursuit of truth with a desire to take on the world. He was able to dialogue with people of other faiths, while adhering strongly to his own. And he exemplified a true populism, desiring to bring the general public to a higher intellectual level, rather than watering down truth to the least common denominator.

II. Warren and Ann Carroll demonstrated the American virtue of being able to take a stand in the world that is honest, tradition, and free.

A. Warren Carroll was raised in a small family, with little faith, but with a deep interest in education and the pursuit of truth.

1. Born in 1932, Warren was the first child of Herbert and Gladys Carroll, who later had a daughter named Sarah. He grew up in Maine and would later recount that his parents gave him a great deal of freedom, but also intellectual guidance and a deep interest in education.
  - a. Both Herbert and Gladys Carroll were graduates of Bates College, a private liberal arts college in Maine that had been founded by abolitionists in 1855 and was a pioneer in coeducation.
  - b. Herbert Carroll was a psychologist who also taught at the University of New Hampshire. Gladys Carroll was an author who chronicled life in Maine. Her 1934 book *As the Earth Turns* was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize,
2. Warren graduated from Berwick Academy in Maine, where he was the valedictorian. Like his parents, he attended Bates College and majored in history, graduating summa cum laude. He then attended Columbia University and earned a doctoral degree. Because his family was of limited means, he wrote his dissertation in a paint shed, for lack of any other place. Warren then went on to earn a law degree from the University of Colorado.
3. Through these years, Warren was a general deist, but had a deep concern for truth. He criticized the university culture for its superficial thought and seeming lack of interest in what was true, rather than what was fashionable or useful. In 1963, he wrote an article for the *ABA Journal*, entitled *Law: A Quest for Certainty*, in which he argued that modern law is losing any connection to philosophy and is becoming thus open to tyranny.

B. Warren Carroll's early working life was bound up in public life and a desire to serve his country.

1. Warren first worked for the Army and then the CIA analyzing Communist propaganda. From 1955 to 1957, he worked for the Signal Corps of the U.S. Army. He then he worked for the CIA in its anti-communist branch. He then became the staff historian for the Second Air Force, Strategic Air Command.
2. After these posts, Warren attended the University of Colorado Law School, earning a law degree in 1964. For a time afterward, he wrote speeches for Texas oilman H.L. Hunt.
3. From 1967-72, Warren Carroll worked for John Schmitz, who was a conservative Republican state senator in California and then U.S. Congressman from 1971 to 1972, which President Richard Nixon supported a Republican who defeated John Schmitz in his reelection bid. Congressman Schmitz used the occasion to make a third part bid for the presidency.

C. In 1967, Warren married Anne Westhoff and then converted to Catholicism a year later.

1. Even in the early 1960s, Warren was reading the works of C.S. Lewis and that gradually raised the question of whether in fact the claims of Christianity were true. That was the central question to Warren Carroll, rather than the issue of whether Christianity was modern or popular or the like.
2. Warren Carroll and Anne Westhoff met in 1962 while he was attending the University of Colorado Law School and she was teaching at a school in Denver. After several years of courting, he married her on July 6, 1967.
3. At that time, he was a deist and had no intention of converting. However, her example and piety brought him to the faith. He would later say that he became Catholic because of her prayers. He began taking instruction in the summer of 1968 and entered the church on December 7 of that year.

D. Anne Westhoff was raised in a humble, but devout Catholic family and began a teaching career early on.

1. Born in 1942, she was the eldest of eight children born to Vernon and Marie Westhoff, a devout Catholic couple who lived in Wiggins, Colorado. They had been married in 1941 and would live their entire 54 year married life on their 320 acre farm.

2. Marie Westhoff was a catechist and the president of the parish Altar and Rosary Society and made sure to hand on prayers and an appreciation for the faith to her children. In 2004, she moved to Manassas near Anne and Warren Carrol.
3. Ann attended a two room school through 8<sup>th</sup> grade and then Wiggins High School, where she was the class salutatorian. (She missed being the valedictorian because of a C in a home economics class).
4. Ann then went on to Loretto Heights College in Denver and majored in English. After graduation, she taught at East High School in Denver.
5. After meeting Warren she went on to earn a Master's Degree in English from New York University and taught at Holy Rosary Academy, an all-girls school in New York and then at the newly established Queen of Apostles Junior College. Both establishments were run the Sisters of the Catholic Apostolate, also called the Pallottine Sisters.

E. In the early 1970s, Warren and Ann Carrol were involved in the Catholic magazine Triumph and its parent organization called The Society for a Christian Commonwealth.

1. After working for Congressman John Schmitz's third party presidential bid in 1972, Warren Carroll began work for Triumph magazine. Triumph was a conservative Catholic magazine that L. Brent Bozell, who was William F. Buckley's brother-in-law, founded in 1966 because he considered The National Review to be too dismissive of Catholics. The magazine only published until 1975. But in its nine years, the magazine brought together many conservative voices at a time when they seemed to be on the defensive.
2. L. Brent Bozell was also president of The Society for a Christian Commonwealth, which promoted traditional faith and morals as central to the restoration of America. Ann Carroll volunteered as the books editor for this group. And Dr. Carroll became the chairman of its educational branch called the Christian Commonwealth Institute.
3. Because Triumph magazine moved its offices to Warrenton, Virginia, Warren and Anne Carrol also moved to that area. In addition to their work with Triumph and the Society for a Christian Commonwealth, the couple engaged in organized farming, raising among other things chickens, rabbits and bees.

F. From this experience with the Society for a Christian Commonwealth, Ann Carrol founded what would become Seton School in Manassas and launched what would become the Seton Home School program.

1. Members of the Christian Commonwealth Institute expressed interest in forming a new Catholic school that would be founded upon classical learning and loyal to the Catholic faith. And so in 1973, Anne Carroll became the headmistress of Christian Commonwealth School, which was located in Warrenton.

a. The project began with eight students and focused on a classics based education and fidelity to the teachings of the Catholic Church at a time when the classics and fidelity to Catholic teachings were being dismissed as out of date. The school also strongly promoted parental involvement and was largely run by the parents.

b. In 1975, after St. Elizabeth Ann Seton's canonization, the school moved to its current location in Manassas and became known as Seton School. At that time, the school had 16 students.

c. Anne Carroll credited the success of the school to the favor of God and the generosity of contributors. In 2004, she said in an interview, "I didn't have the resources at the beginning. . . . The success of Seton, under God's grace, has been because of the resources of all those who have contributed over the years.

d. Seton School continues to be a solidly Catholic and reasonably priced Catholic school, which is largely by parents. It is now thriving with 350 students and 29 teachers.

4. Increasingly, Anne Carrol was getting requests for educational resources from parent who, because of distance or finances, could not send their children to Seton School. Many of them wished to home school their children; they were at the foundation of the modern home schooling movement.

a. And so, in 1980, Anne Carroll opened a division of the Seton School that focused on selling books for parents to educate their own children. It was soon called the Seton Home School program.

b. The program was immensely successful and soon began to become its own organization. And so, in 1985, one of the employees of Sseton School Mary Clark began to run it as an independent organization.

- c. Today, the Seton Home School program serves over 10,000 students and helps parents who are interested in the expanding home schooling effort,
- d. Anne Carroll and Mary Clark saw no opposition between the two fields, but rather viewed both of them as helping parents hand on their values to their children.

G. Then, in 1977, Warren Carroll; made another bold move and founded Christendom College, with the mission of providing a classics based education faithful to the Catholic Church.

1. The idea of an unapologetically Catholic college also seemed to be on the want. In 1967, 26 American Catholic universities, led by Notre Dame and its president Fr. Theodore Hesburgh signed the Land O' Lakes Conference agreement, which presented Catholic universities as independent of Catholic doctrine. That principle of separating Catholic universities from fidelity to the Catholic faith became very popular in universities around the country. As Dr. Jeff Mirus, one of the co-founders of Christendom College, said in his obituary of Warren Carroll. "When Warren Carroll founded Christendom in the late 1970s, Catholic higher education was dominated by Modernism and secularism. His vision for what was then a new kind of Catholic college was as courageous as it was unique."

2. Blessed Pope Paul VI disagreed with this trend in higher education in the United States and Europe, but could do little about it.

- a. In a speech in August, 1975, the Pope said, "In recent years some Catholic universities have become convinced that they can better respond to the various problems of man and his world by playing down their own Catholic character. But what has been the effect of this trend? The principles and values of the Christian religion have been watered down and weakened; they have been replaced by a humanism which has turned out to be really a secularization. Morals within the university community have degenerated to the point where many young people no longer perceive the beauty and attractiveness of the Christian virtues."
- b. The Holy Father went on to call for a reversal of this trend. Catholic universities, he said, "must see to it that in the pursuit of their disciplines, in the books they publish and in all other academic undertakings, they

always foster the full integrity of Catholic doctrine, obedience to the Church's teaching authority and fidelity to the hierarchy and the Apostolic See.”

3. At the time, there were other educators who were trying to preserve authentically Catholic education. Thus, for example, the faithfully Catholic Thomas Aquinas College was founded in California in 1971; and Magdelene College was founded in New Hampshire in 1973.
4. As a part of The Commonwealth Christian Institute's educational efforts, in 1975, Thomas McFadden and Anne Carroll took charge in putting together a week long Family Institute on property belonging to the AFL-CIO in Front Royal. The parents would attend their educational seminars, and the children would receive education and recreation headed by Anne Carroll.
5. The Family Institute gathered for a second time in 1976. And on that occasion, Warren Carrol announced the effort to launch a new faithful classics based college in Virginia that would be known as Christendom College.
6. Dr. Carroll soon gained five major donors, who gave several thousand dollars apiece. He put together a faculty of himself and four others.
7. The college began in 1977 with 26 students in a piece of rented property and the five faculty members. Bill and Onalee McGraw, whose three children include Fr. Steve McGraw, were also involved in the operations at the beginning. The College was first located in an eight room building on the property of St. Francis of Assisi parish in Triangle, Virginia. They had \$52,000 in funds raised when they began and anticipated revenues of about \$110,000.
8. One of the co-founders, Dr. Mirus has said that there was some conflict in the beginning over the direction of the College. But Dr. Carroll was able to reconcile the parties.
9. After two years, the lease in Triangle was expiring, but the AFL-CIO property that the Family Institute met at became available. However, the price was too high for the college to afford. And so the first Bishop of the Arlington Diocese Thomas Welch called the president of the AFL-CIO George

Meamey, who offered the property to them for \$275,000, a one third reduction. They needed a \$75,000 down payment to buy the property, and donors came through with that amount.

H. From the beginning, Christendom College stood out as a leader in Catholic education.

1. The College's founding statement explicitly rejected the Land O' Lakes Conference viewpoint. It instead focused on preserving and promoting a Catholic vision of the world.

2. At the beginning of the college Dr. Carroll wrote out a response to the question: What is Christendom?

a. The statement began with the unapologetic declaration, "Our college takes its name from the word which embodies the Christian social and political ideal: a society, a culture, a government in which Christ the King reigns. To help extend His reign, insofar as His grace strengthens us to do so, is the heart of our mission."

b. Dr. Carroll's response then went on to say that, with a faith based approach to the various fields of learning, the teachers and students, would with other Christians, "try to build in our own lives, and in our work with fellow Christians, a mini-Christendom, a society, however small, in which Christ does truly reign."

c. Dr. Carroll recognized that there was no longer a broad Christendom in the West. But he said that the true Christian would never accept such a situation, "for he has a message to bring to the world."

3. Patrick Reilly, the president of The Cardinal Newman Society, which is dedicated to the promotion of Catholic education wrote in his review of Christendom that the college was an inspiration to other Catholic institutions and anticipated St. John Paul II's instructions for Catholic universities, which would be summarized in his 1990 instruction *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. As Mr. Reilly wrote, "The example of Christendom as one of the few early colleges to really embrace the message of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* even before it was issued has given rise to a whole series of new Catholic colleges modeled after Christendom – schools that have embraced a strong Catholic identity in reaction to the decline of Catholic identity elsewhere."

4. In order to remain independent of government control, Christendom College has steadfastly refused to take government grants to fund education, instead relying on generosity and above all the Providence of God.

5. Christendom College has strongly promoted vocations across the board, to priesthood, religious life, and marriage. By 2011, there were 2640 graduates of Christendom College. Among them were 63 priests and 43 religious brothers and sisters, along with about 300 married couples who both graduated from the College.

I. Warren and Ann Carroll continued to promote Catholic education for years to come; and their schools continue to promote the faith to this day.

1. Warren Carrol handed over leadership of Christendom College in 1985 to become chairman of the history department. All of the undergraduates took his classes.
2. He soon began work on his monumental series six volume series The History of Christendom, which is probably the most well researched English language history of the Catholic Church. He, Anne and some student worked together worked on the fifth and sixth volume, with the last one published after his death.
3. Warren would routinely work well into the night even to 2 or 3 in the morning and delighted in telling accounts of history. He also wrote a number of historical works, such as on the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution and Communism, Queen Isadore of Spain and on Our Lady of Guadalupe. Expanding into other literary forms, he wrote The Tarrant Chronicles, Catholic fiction about a Catholic from the Chicago area in the WWII era.
4. Anne Carroll continues to be the headmistress of Seton School in Manassas. Over the years, she has written several history and religion books for high schoolers, such as Christ the King, Lord of History, Christ in the Americas, Catholic World Culture and Following Christ in the World, a high school senior guide to defending the faith.

5. Dr. Warren Carroll died in 2011, a month before his sister. At his funeral, the current president of Christendom College Dr. Timothy O'Donnell said of Dr. Carroll, "Warren always had the gift of seeing things in a radiant light, extolling and embracing the heroic in history and in ordinary life, in the struggle of good against evil, light against darkness, truth against falsehood, the knight battling the dragon. Some thought this rather naive – antiquated – rejecting such categories, preferring the shadowlands of uncertainty and the false comfort of a timid agnosticism so characteristic of our modern times. But Warren was a true visionary, and he would have none of this." Dr. O'Connell then said of Anne Carroll, "If ever the saying was true, behind every great man there is a great woman, that saying is true of Anne Carrol." Like Warren, he credited Warren's conversion to her. And he went on to commend their witness of married love into old age and infirmity.

J. Warren and Ann Carrol launched a revival of education in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century as St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and St. John Neumann had done in the early and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. In the modern era, education has largely been taken over by large organizations. In that context, they joined together the American emphasis on education with a populist respect for the rights of parents and families as opposed to large institutions. As the Founding Fathers did, they were willing to stand up to the powers of the world with a strength based upon the eternal law of God. Grounded in tradition, they prepared the way for a new springtime in Catholic education and culture.