

## **Delegation Submission from Ted Schmidt for the 2024-04-30 Student Achievement (SAWB) Meeting.**

In October 1979 as head of the Religion department at Neil McNeil Catholic Secondary school I penned the article “Catholic schools in football Now is the time to get out” for the CT Reporter. It landed in every teacher’s mailbox.

The response as one could expect was varied.

I did not write in a vacuum. I played the game in high school and university and coached at Mimico High. I entered Catholic education in 1968 and almost left in 1970, disgusted at the arrogance and put down of public education. I did not see how we were” schools with a difference.”

A committed, theologically sophisticated priest, Thomas Melady, was then head of the board’s Religion department. He begged me to stay, sensing that Vatican II and its profound values were ascendant. Both of us radically embraced Gaudium et Spes, the doctrine of the Church in the world, its emphasis on the dignity and reverence for the human person (#27).

We were reminded that the social order needs constant improvement (#26), the centrality of justice. He taught us by example that we too must shoulder the cross which the world and flesh inflicts upon those who search after peace and justice (38). We are witnesses of the birth of a new humanism, one of which man is defined as first of all by his responsibility towards his brothers and sisters, and towards history (#55). We cannot fail to praise those who renounce the use of violence in the vindication of their rights (#78).

Conrad Dobler, of the National Football League, once said, “If you ever forget that football is a violent sport. They’ll catch you gazing at the stars and put your lights out.”

Over the years, I watched football slowly die as CTE became obvious, particularly to mothers who refused permission for their children to play the violent game

My argument was and is violence is endemic to football. In every Catholic classroom we are reminded of the witness of the nonviolent Jesus. Here we embrace the power of love, football is the glorification and love of power. The qualities of the human person we most prize - compassion justice, gentleness, interiority are suborned and as the world grows coarse they are precisely the qualities we need in abundance today.

Imagine the impact if Catholic education mandated within a few years the end of football. The public would be stunned that we were indeed schools with a difference. This would be prophetic, risk taking for the greater good, not only of society but for the health and wellbeing of our precious young people.