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Cristo Rey vs. alumni

Joe Ferullo | Aug. 19, 2009 NCR Today

What happens when your old Catholic alma mater is no longer the same place it used to be? That's become an issue for many successful alumni of Verbum Dei high school in the Watts section of south Los Angeles.

In the year 2000, Verbum Dei was like a lot of inner city Catholic schools -- struggling to make ends meet while serving an increasingly impoverished student body. As the *Los Angeles Times* reported on Wednesday [1], that was when Cardinal Roger Mahony approached the Jesuits to take over the school.

They did and converted it into the "Cristo Rey" model -- schools for the poor where students help meet tuition requirements by taking work/study jobs with major corporations and other sponsors. It has been remarkably successful throughout the country, and it saved Verbum Dei.

But, Verbum Dei was the first school that did not start out as a Cristo Rey institution -- so it has legions of alumni from the "old days." They are now successful and solidly middle-class, thanks to their alma mater -- and want to send their children there to keep the tradition alive.

One problem -- they can't. As a Cristo Rey school, Verbum Dei can only take in the poor and disadvantaged, something the kids of these top grads definitely are not. Both sides are being respectful in their disagreement, and it is hard to see a middle ground here.

But, honestly, this is a problem (too much love and respect) most educational institutions would die for. And another tribute to the lasting strength and impact of inner city Catholic schools.

Source URL (retrieved on *12/13/2013 - 06:04*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/cristo-rey-vs-alumni

Links:
[1] http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-verbum19-2009aug19,0,7211199.story