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Roanoke Catholic listed among top 50 Catholic schools in U.S.

A Michigan-based group's first honor roll also puts Roanoke Catholic in the top 20 nationally for civic education.

By [Kathy Lu](#)

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Roanoke Catholic School has been named to an honor roll that recognizes the country's top 50 Catholic high schools for overall excellence.

In addition, the Catholic High School Honor Roll named the Roanoke school to the country's top 20 Catholic high schools for civic education.

"It's a great distinction," said Ray-Eric Correia, president of Roanoke Catholic. "I'm proud of the school. It's really neat to see what we're able to accomplish."

This first honor roll is a project of the Michigan-based Acton Institute for the Study of Religion & Liberty, an international research and educational organization. Kevin Schmiesing, director of the honor roll, said schools were chosen based on their responses to surveys on three different areas: academic excellence; the school's Catholic identity; and civic education.

With an enrollment of 563 students from preschool through 12th grade and a \$3 million capital campaign under way, Roanoke Catholic is one of Roanoke Valley's largest private schools. The honor roll puts it on par with the 2,100-student St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and the 23-student Holy Rosary Academy in Anchorage, Alaska.

"I think this demonstrates that they're offering an excellent Catholic education," Schmiesing said of Roanoke Catholic.

Schmiesing said the surveys were sent to about 1,300 Catholic high schools across the country and about 250 responded. Of those, Roanoke Catholic was the only respondent from Virginia, but Schmiesing said location did not factor into the final results.

Schmiesing said schools earned scores for each of their responses, and the surveys ranged in length from 16 to 23 questions. While some questions measured data - such as the average PSAT scores over two years - others measured a school's commitment to Catholic teaching. According to the honor roll's Web site, most of those questions were based on ecclesiastical documents and were answered in the agree/disagree format.

In civic education, Correia said Roanoke Catholic makes community service a requisite. For instance, upper school students (grades eight-12) are required to volunteer at least 40 hours annually. In the 2002-03 year, upper school students accumulated more than 13,000 hours of community service - an average of 56 hours per student.

"We are developing solid, moral character," Correia said.

Faith also plays an important role at the school, which is subsidized by five area parishes and is located beside St. Andrew's Catholic Church. Correia said that about 75 percent of the students are Catholic, but the school welcomes children of all faiths. Prayers are said every day and the rosary is recited in the school chapel on Tuesdays. While participation in religious activities is voluntary, Correia said the school expects respect from those who do not participate.

According to Roanoke Catholic's Web site, the annual tuition for nonparishioner students in grades 10-12 is \$7,010 and \$5,855 for parishioner students. The school is also accredited by the Virginia Catholic Education Association and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

On the Net:

www.acton.org

www.chshonor.org

www.roanokecatholic.com

CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL HONOR ROLL

Recognizes Catholic schools in three areas: academic excellence; the school's Catholic identity; and civic education.

This is the first honor roll.

Schools from 25 states made the honor roll.

Its goal is to be a resource for the public.

METHODOLOGY:

Schools earned scores for responses to surveys in the three areas.

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SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

What percentage of the class of 2003 maintained a cumulative grade point average of 4.0 or better?

Does the theology curriculum include a section (year or part-year) on Catholic social teaching?

In a pluralistic society such as the United States, it is permissible for Catholic voters and politicians to allow legalized abortion in some cases. Do you strongly agree, agree, have no opinion, disagree or strongly disagree?