

## Teach Me to Be Generous: The First Century of Regis High School in New York City

By Anthony D. Andreassi C.O. C.O.

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### **Teach Me to Be Generous: The First Century of Regis High School in New York City** By Anthony D. Andreassi C.O. C.O.

Teach Me to Be Generous tells the remarkable story of Regis High School, the Jesuit school on New York's Upper East Side that was founded in 1914 by an anonymous donor as a school for Catholic boys whose families could not otherwise afford a Catholic education. Enabled by the philanthropy of the founding family for nearly a century, and now by alumni and friends carrying on that tradition of generosity, Regis has been able to provide tuition-free, all-scholarship education for its entire history. It also holds the distinction of being the first free-standing Jesuit high school in the United States, with no connection to any Jesuit colleges or universities.

Regis High School's unique story is told by an engaging storyteller and historian who has taught at the school for more than ten years. Father Andreassi offers captivating glimpses into the lives and daily experiences of Regis's students and faculty while chronicling the development of the school's educational philosophy and spiritual approach in its first century. Filled with entertaining anecdotes alongside wider historical context and illuminating statistical analysis, Teach Me to Be Generous tracks Regis High School through the decades of the twentieth century to the present day—from the generosity of a devout Catholic widow, through the Depression and World War II, to changes in demographics of the Catholic community and shifts in the landscape of Catholic education in New York City. During the school's first few decades, Regis admitted thousands of Catholic boys, mostly from poor or lower-middle-class families, helping prepare them for success in college and leadership positions in the professions. Because of the closing of dozens of urban Catholic schools and the general decline of the quality of New York City's public schools, in more recent years the school has faced the challenge of remaining true to its mission in offering an education to Catholic boys “who otherwise would not be able to afford a Catholic education.”

Teach Me to Be Generous paints a vivid portrait of the first one hundred years of an exceptional institution and looks with hope and confidence to its future.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

“Established as the first freestanding Jesuit high school in the country (earlier schools were the lower divisions of colleges), Regis High School was built by an extraordinary history of anonymous generosity that kept it operating for a century without charge to its students and their families. In the story of Regis High School lies a singular history of Catholic philanthropy to rise out of the Gilded Age. That story deserves to be told. And now, at the school’s centennial anniversary and after its founding family has passed away, Father Anthony Andreassi, C.O., weaves the tale of how extraordinary charity built a landmark edifice where the brightest and most talented young men have been awarded scholarships for a century now. Their success has been a vanguard of immigrant Catholics coming of age in the United States?building society, strengthening the Church, and serving as leaders in every imaginable field.” (?Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan, Archbishop of New York *from the foreword*)

in 'Teach Me to be Generous', Anthony Andreassi, C.O., provides a clear history of Regis that makes it more of a community than an institution. Despite financial struggle, issues surrounding the diversity of the student population, the pursuit of justice and internal battles that have been waged and won, Regis is still a fine Jesuit institution. Through Andreassi, we see what great things generosity can accomplish. (?*America Magazine*)

The Regis saga and the wider tale of Jesuit secondary education now are captured in 'Teach Me to be Generous; The First Century of Regis High School in New York City', a scholarly history by Anthony D. Andreassi, CO, an Oratorian priest and Regis history teacher. Written with the schools cooperation, it recounts the story warts-and-all including the intrigues surrounding the school's founding. (?*Commonweal*)

With meticulous use of sources, Andreassi weaves together items from the school's student newspapers, its yearbook, and several provincial archives to bring to life the daily workings of the school classroom, at sporting events, and even in detention. It is rich with stories like that of the school's short-lived football team or of the 'rock and roll hymns' and Coke bottle candlesticks present at mass in the heady years surrounding Vatican II. (Chris Staysniak, Boston College ?*Journal of Jesuit Studies*)

“Teach Me to be Generous is a thorough and engaging history of one of America’s most fascinating Catholic secondary schools... Andreassi’s tale is one of religion, philanthropy, education, and urban history, and the complicated interactions therein. In an age when too many Catholic schools struggle to finance themselves, this book provides hope.” (?Thomas A. McCabe *author of Miracle on High Street*)

“This book provides interesting historical information about the founding of New York’s Regis High School, the nation’s only tuition-free Jesuit high school. It should especially appeal to alums who have experienced its academic rigors.” (?Eileen Wirth *Creighton University*)

#### About the Author

Anthony D. Andreassi, C.O., a priest of the Brooklyn Oratory of St. Philip Neri, holds a doctorate in history from Georgetown University with a specialization in the history of American Catholicism. He has taught history at Regis High School since 2003.

His Eminence Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan is Archbishop of New York. He has published widely on

Church doctrine. One of Cardinal Dolan's recent publications is A People of Hope: The Challenges Facing the Catholic Church and the Faith That Can Save It, coauthored with John L. Allen, Jr.

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