

Saint Joseph's School: Educating Mind, Heart and Soul

Over the past couple of weeks we've had our first two school Masses of the year, and on the first day of school I was able to greet the students as they got off the bus along with Emmett who was quite excited to see so many new friends.

Each year, it's always great to see the kids return and I am reminded of how blessed I am to have served in parishes that each had a school, because our Catholic schools truly are about educating the whole child.

One of my favorite verses in 1 Corinthians 9:24-25, where Saint Paul says: "Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one." These are such great words of wisdom, but sometimes our society stresses winning the perishable crown. Kids can be told that above all else, what matters is being over-scheduled, in a million sports leagues, getting perfect grades and into the perfect school.

It is important to learn about the world we live in and receive a good education. Sports can bring people together, teach teamwork and provide needed exercise. And hobbies are a good thing too. So is getting a good job. But, as I've preached about on numerous occasions, what matters ultimately most is getting to heaven. This is why God must always be at the center, and everything else must revolve around that relationship we have with God. Only when we have God with us to learn from Him and how to respond to His love can we become saints.

This is what makes Saint Joseph's School such wonderful place. The core values of our school are:

Evangelizing – Our parish school possesses an evangelizing attitude that is inherent in our words, actions, and ministry reflecting that all of us are children of God created in God's image and likeness.

Lifelong Learning – Our parish school is dedicated to growing in our knowledge of Jesus through formal and informal education throughout our lives. We embrace opportunities for continual learning and strive for achievement in all areas of learning and life.

One in Christ – Our parish school is strengthened by diversity, a product of God's creative wisdom. By expressing and utilizing our unique individual gifts, we are cultivating the Kingdom of God on earth.

Prayer and Worship – Our parish school values prayer and worship as a sacred means through which we deepen our relationship with God and one another. Our expressions of faith embrace tradition and a relevant message for 21st century Christians.

Respect for All People – Our parish school is committed to God’s commandment to love one another. We welcome and engage all who are served by our ministry. We interact with people, whether within or outside our school community, in a respectful, welcoming, and caring manner.

Service – Our parish school values and promotes service in living out our faith both locally and in our greater community. God calls and empowers us to use our gifts and talents for the benefit of others, especially those who are most in need. In middle school, students are given the opportunity for social justice learning field trips.

Academically, there is a great curriculum with full day kindergarten and children receiving a great education in religion, language arts, math, science and social studies. But spiritually the students are able to receive so much too, learning about God’s love for them through the sacraments, and how to make that love known in the world.

As the school year gets going in earnest now, I’d again like to thank everyone for their support of our school. A big “thank you” to Mrs. Kelly Roche and the great faculty who care so much for the children, and to our entire parish. Enrollment has increased this year, and our pre-school is thriving. There is also a sense of true parish support for our school; unlike in some parishes, I’ve never sensed the “school” and “non school” people divide; rather people appreciate and understand that whether they have children in the school or not, if they are a parishioner at Saint Joseph’s, this is truly their school.

For all of our parents, I’d invite you to again to think about those words from Saint Paul and remember the Church teaches us that parents are the primary educators of the faith for their children. So as the school year unfolds, keep working hard and helping them to persevere. But also continually send them the message that what matters most is keeping God front and center in their lives, so pray with them, talk to them about the faith, live out the faith through kindness, charity and forgiveness, take them to Mass and explain to them what goes on at Mass, and help them to see how much God loves them. And for all of us, even if our last day of formal education is in the rear-view mirror, may we never forget the school of sainthood is always in session.

God bless,

Fr. Paul

Book of the Week: I was asked to list the book I use at each children’s Mass, so will do that this year too. Each children’s Mass for the homily I began with a story to lead into the points I try to make, and for our opening Mass I used the book “**Thank You, Omu!**” By Oge Mora. The book tells the story of a woman living in an apartment in the big city making some stew for dinner. The aroma of the stew can be smelled down the hall and out the window into the street; as such many visitors come by asking what it is, and to

try some, until she runs out and is left with nothing for dinner. But showing their thanks for what she did for them, they return to prepare for her a wonderful dinner. It's a reminder that as the school year begins, we are called to always strive to think of one another and not just be takers but givers.