

Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service

St. Edward, St. George, St. Paul Parishes and Schools
St. Peter Parish, Seattle, WA

May 6, 2017

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Whenever I do the blessing of the children during the weekend Masses, I see we are blessed with many school-aged children. But most of them are not in our parish schools – and this bothers me. Thus, I wish to share with you some thoughts on this issue.

Scripture tells us that Jesus, in the family home in Nazareth, “grew in age, and wisdom, and grace before God.” And isn’t that what we want for all the children of our parish, that they would grow in age, and wisdom, and grace before God?

Catholic schools are here precisely to assist families to teach their children as Jesus was taught as a child, and as He himself taught in His public life. We live in a culture that exalts selfishness and materialistic things. The music, television and electronic games glorify violence, death and loveless sex. This culture overwhelms our children with values that are completely opposed to our Catholic Faith.

St. Edward, St. George and St. Paul parish schools teach the culture of life and light, promote the love of God and neighbor, and teach our children the values of the Kingdom of God. They also teach reading, writing, math, science, art and music, and teach these subjects effectively and with excellence. Our schools, gifts to us in the present from our fellow parishioners of the past, are for ALL the children of our Church.

If you are a Mom or a Dad, a Grandparent, a Godparent, an Auntie, an Uncle, a brother or sister, a caring neighbor, here is my important message to you—our Catholic schools are here first and foremost for the children in your lives. We are now enrolling in our schools from preschool through 8th Grade. It is not yet too late. We want the children, who are precious to you, to be in our classrooms.

These parish schools are one of our biggest ministries as the Catholic Church. They are how we pass on our Catholic Faith to the next generation. They are how we help our parish families carry out their awesome responsibility to raise and educate their children in a very difficult modern world.

However, I am very concerned, as your Pastor, that many of our school-aged children are not enrolled in our schools. The idea of our schools is NOT that they are for just a few. They are for ALL of our parish children. It is true that our schools charge tuition, and that may be scaring some of you away from the schools. On this point, I am asking you to STOP AND THINK AGAIN. Make an appointment with the principal of the school. Go and visit. See what is going on in those hallways and classrooms. Visualize your child, your grandchild, your godchild, your niece, or your nephew in the parish school. Would this be good for the child? Would this be good for the family?

If you have the sincere desire of a Catholic education for your child, it is available to you. You will have to do your part. What makes our schools so great is that our families are involved in them. So, yes, you will need to attend parent meetings, and volunteer your time for school projects. You will have to pay a fair amount consistent with your income. There is a **limited financial aid available** to families with limited means. We will work with you on a PERSONAL and INDIVIDUALIZED basis to put Catholic education in reach for your child. We want to help remove the barriers. As an active member of our four parishes, you qualify for the in-parish tuition rate at each of these schools.

Catholic education is not a toy that will be broken, or a trip to the mall that will be forgotten. It is the lasting gift of a lifetime that will help shape and form your child. Don't walk away from this gift! Look into your hearts. Consider your responsibility. Examine your deepest beliefs and **RETHINK YOUR PRIORITIES.**

Catholic education has been in Western Washington for more than 150 years. These schools were built by immigrants almost 100 years ago and maintained by succeeding generations. They might be your parents, grandparents, great grandparents and maybe you yourself as an alumnus/alumna. They were built to serve the children of the next generation – your children!

As we know, the dominant culture today has little respect for the values of our faith. Our parish schools provide a place where children can be nurtured in a safe environment, and taught the values of the Gospel rather than the values of the mall. I urge you to support our parish schools. Jesus says, "Let the children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs." Help get the children of our parishes who belong in these schools enrolled in them! You will be doing a real service to the children. You will also be heeding Christ's command to "Go, Teach all nations." Our faith calls us to action. This action can begin by again making the parish school the center of our parish life.

Once more, I urge you to talk to one of our school principals. If your child's grade level is full, the principal can refer you to one of the other schools in our cluster where there may be room. If you still need help, come and see me. Let me help you do the right thing for your child, grandchild, godchild, niece, nephew or neighbor. Thank you and God bless you!

Blessings,

Father Felino S. Paulino
Pastor

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