

Educating Minds, Hearts and Souls: Celebrating Saint Joseph's School

Throughout my priesthood, I've been privileged to serve at parishes having a school, and also spend time visiting the kids.

I remember when I was at my first parish, Holy Name of Jesus, I'd sometimes eat lunch with the kids. I was called out by a first grader though who inquired "why do you always sit with the boys?" I got the message and started moving around.

I also was "auctioned off" at the school gala there as part of a "give a teacher a day off day." I guess they thought I was qualified to teach first grade. When one girl in class started crying because her best friend did something she didn't like, I quickly had one of those Tom Hanks moments from "A League of their Own" (Are you crying? There's no crying in first grade!). Thankfully another teacher next door quickly took over.

Through the years there's been visits with my doggos Kirby and now Emmett; there's been kickball games; there's been reading of stories and "Q and A" sessions about what it's like to be a priest. And of course scores of school Masses. But what is really neat as a pastor is you generally are in a parish longer; so now some of the kids who were just in first grade when I started are getting set to graduate, and you get to see them over the years.

Yes, I'm biased, but there is something really special about a Catholic school. Kids learn so much, but also learn about how to grow as people and what it means to come to know God and to love Him. They learn about the dignity of the human person; how we are body and soul; and how we should truly link love of God and neighbor, as our school's theme this year is Luke 10:27: "Love the Lord God with all your heart mind and soul and love your neighbor as yourself."

Being here at Saint Joe's, it's also been so great to see the dedication of the staff.

It goes without saying the last two years have been incredibly challenging on everyone, but I think this is especially true for teachers. Here at Saint Joe's, Kelly Roche, our principal, has worked tirelessly to make sure our students could still come to school while doing her best to deal with the impacts of the pandemic. Despite the challenges, our teachers and staff have really risen to the occasion. We all hope and pray for much more normalcy soon.

But, truth be told, our teachers and staff have always risen to the occasion. They have a deep love for our students, and see the potential inside each of them. With their hard work, so many great things happen here at Saint Joseph's.

Our philosophy at the school is summed up in our core values:

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.

This past year has been a very exciting one for our parish.

We've added a second kindergarten class, and are planning a second first grade class for this upcoming fall.

Our preschool continues to thrive and be at full capacity.

We've also seen our overall enrollment grow from last year from 266 to 193, and families are seeing the positive impact our school has on their kids with our retention rate at 90%.

We've also seen technology expand at our school with Chromebooks and tablets for each student.

Yes I'm biased, but the list of what makes our school so amazing is pretty long. I'm so amazed at how hard Mrs. Roche and the teachers work; they have huge hearts, and love our students so much. What a joy it is to work with them, and to see the fruits of their labor in our students blossom.

As we celebrate Catholic Schools Week this week, I'd like to thank you for your support of our school. And if you or someone you know is looking for a place for your child or grandchild, please prayerfully consider Saint Joe's. Mrs. Roche is happy to give you a tour or send you more information.

God bless you and have a wonderful week,

Fr. Paul