

WHY CATHOLIC EDUCATION STILL MATTERS IN 10 REASONS

1 An Incarnational View of the World

Catholic School students learn that God is present and active in their lives and in the world. They learn to recognize the “footprints of God” in their daily experiences, especially in the midst of life’s challenges. They develop a sense of “sacramental awareness”. They see the signs of God’s love around them, and become instruments of God’s grace in their own neighborhoods, communities and the world. In an incarnational view of the world, there is no such thing as a secular subject as all learning helps to develop and bring to full bloom that image of God that is in each person.

2 Immersion in the Paschal Mystery

Our lives are a series of small and not so small dyings and risings. In union with the Paschal Mystery, we realize that there is redemptive power in suffering, and in the power of the cross. In it lies the answer to the mystery of all of life’s successes and failures. In the experience of the Paschal Mystery, we also realize the need for community. Like Jesus, we encounter our own Simon of Cyrenes to help us along the way. Wins and losses on the athletic field, As and Fs in class, and laughter and tears in our lives are the way we participate in Jesus’ dying and rising.

3 The Value of Relationships as a Reflection of the Divine

Catholic school students learn to experience God’s grace and presence in their lives through their relationships with family, friends and teachers. The loving and supportive relationships they experience are reflections of the love and life-giving dynamic of the Trinity. As a community we celebrate our successes and achievements. We share grief and downfalls. We unite together in solidarity, and even challenge each other to become better reflections of the divine. We are made for community.

4 A Nuanced View of Scripture

Catholic school students are given the opportunity to explore the beauty and richness of Sacred Scripture seen through the lens of faith and lived out in daily practice. They experience the ongoing revelation of God in Scripture as the One who leads the Israelites through the promised land, and who redeems them through His cross and resurrection. They also come to view the human person as created in God’s image and likeness, and destined for eternal life. They learn to apply Scripture to their own lives as a tool for prayer and the true guide for virtuous living.

5 Civic Engagement

In recent research, it has been reported that private school graduates are significantly more likely to actively participate in civic activities than their public school counterparts. Catholic Schools were ranked #1 in the percentage of graduates who actively participate in civic and community activities such as voting, volunteering, letter-writing to legislators, Catholic Concerns Day, and donations to charity, not just for a tax write-off, but out of a sense of the requirements of justice.

6 Service for the Common Good

Catholic schools promote service as an essential component of their curriculum. Many Catholic schools have service programs from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Higher education programs such as the Jesuit or Dominican Volunteer Corps promote service at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Diocesan organizations such as Catholic Family Services provide resources and help to people from all walks of life. Catholic school students learn that since community is at the heart of who we are, there are no strangers, only brothers and sisters in the Lord. We have a responsibility to respond to the needs of others because we are all part of God’s family.

7 Discipline as a Faith Expectation

Catholic schools promote self-discipline through clarity of moral vision that is based on the Gospel. Students are challenged to be Christ-like in word and action. They are asked to examine their choices and action in light of the Ten Commandments and the Gospel law of love. They are given a theological foundation for ethical behavior. Students are not good because they act in accord with rules and expectations. Rather, because students are good, i.e. sons and daughters of God, they are expected to act and make choices that are in keeping with this dignity.

8 The Centrality of Arts, Ritual, Drama, Music to the Life of Faith

Through Catholic education, students are exposed to the richness of the religious tradition. Music, Art, Literature, Drama and Ritual are rooted in the rich history of the Church, and find their truest glory as an expression of divine praise.

9 The Fullness of the Catholic Identity at the Heart of the Church

Catholic education has always been at the heart of the Catholic mission. Catholic education, and the students who are the product of it, have been called the “greatest work of the Church”. They have been entrusted with the fullness of faith and have been charged with the mission of evangelization. They are to go out into the world and share the gifts they have received, as doctors, lawyers, policemen, firemen, businessmen and women, teachers, priests and religious, all as Catholic school graduates. Catholic school graduates are a leaven in society, helping the broader community to be the best that it can be.

10 Personal Excellence as a Spiritual Goal

Catholic school students learn that excellence is a response to God’s blessings. Academic excellence is not a gospel value in and of itself. The Sermon on the Mount doesn’t say “Blessed are you who get all A’s.” Education must have an altruistic orientation. Students learn so as to help others, and make a difference in the world around them.

