

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK January 2008

At the Easter Vigil, the Church begins the Mass in total darkness then, a fire is lit and from it the big candle is lit, which symbolizes Christ's triumph over death through the Resurrection. From this big candle, all other candles held by the people in attendance are lit. Interestingly, while each person is holding his or her own candle the flame which is passed from the Christ candle to every other candle relates us to each other as Church.

The motto of this year's National Catholic School's Week is "Catholic Schools light the way..." While people are quick to complete the sentence with words like "tomorrow's leaders," "well-rounded students," "good citizens," "a society based on faith," "firm foundation in Christian values," nobody has mentioned the obvious. What begins at the Easter Vigil, the flame of Christ, is passed from one person to the next until the whole gathering is holding lit candles. What starts with Christ brings us back to Christ. Yes, Catholic schools light the way...ultimately, to Jesus.

Think about the big statue outside of our school of children gathering around Jesus. In a way, to those who see this it's as if Jesus, himself, is the best publicity for who we are: his followers. At the same time, that statue entitled, "let the little children come to me," is like the light of a lighthouse, inviting all who pass by it into the safe harbor of our school, a special place, a little community or, better, a family where everyone is related, not by little candles, not by a flame, not by the uniform they wear or the town in which they live we are related by Jesus who is and must always be, the real reason why Catholic schools exist. If we were only interested in academics, in making sure that you excel in reading, writing, spelling, language arts, math, science and social studies, you could get the same education at any public school to which your parents are entitled by the taxes they pay to the towns in which you, students, reside. If we just wanted you to get religion, we could achieve this by simply enrolling you in CCD or the School of Religion as we like to call it. But there is something more which a Catholic School provides besides academics and religion it's total emersion in Jesus from morning prayers, to playing together during recess, from breaking bread together during lunch, to playing basketball together after school. The entire day is centered in Jesus the entire curriculum gravitates around Jesus. The whole purpose for our school's existence is to make you the best disciples of Jesus as

possible, through our individual and group dynamics or, in simpler terms, by our interaction with Jesus, we share the light of his love with our classmates, with our school mates, with our teacher, with our families, with our clergy, with our neighbors at home, with the communities in which we live. Yes, for over forty years, children have passed through the doors of this school they have come to Jesus: to learn, to grow, to love, to share, to become what God wants them to be, using their minds, bodies and souls to become other lights, another lighthouse like the statue of Jesus outside the school, welcoming those they meet in life with a smile, with warmth, with zeal for the faith, with love for the Church and our country, with a healthy respect for ourselves, with reverence for God in our neighbor, with devotion to our families, with a deep desire to learn and a strong commitment to work as a team in order to build the Kingdom of God. We, at St. James School, do this, for the honor and glory of God the Father, through Jesus, in the Holy Spirit. In the process, like those candles at the Easter Vigil, we radiate and reflect Jesus in and to the world.

I salute you St. James School administrators, faculty, support staff, parents and students. In Jesus, we are related! For Jesus, we exist as a school. Shine on and continue to light the way to the One who is the way, the truth and the life!

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Pastor