

Catholic Schools Week Mass
1-31-07

As we celebrate Catholic Schools Week, we may wonder, "how are we any different from any other school?" Well, the answer is found in the word "Catholic," if we can use this word as an "acronym." In other words, each letter of the word "Catholic" stands for a word which tells us something about who we are as the community of St. James School.

C This first letter stands for "Church," because our school was born from the people who are the Church of St. James. In the 1950's, Fr. Wade, the Pastor, and the parishioners wanted to build a catholic school for their children. Once they obtained permission from the Bishop of Trenton, this dream for a parochial school became a reality in 1965 when St. James School opened its doors for the first time. For almost 43 years, the Church of St. James has supported this school and makes great sacrifices to make sure that we can offer a truly "Catholic" education to all who are enrolled in this school.

A This letter stands for "academics." A Catholic school isn't limited to just teaching religion. Like any other educational institution, we want to provide our students with a solid academic program and encourage our students to achieve academic excellence.

T This letter refers to "totality." Here at St. James School, we are interested in the formation of the total person, not just the mind but the heart and soul as well. So, we strive to shape the mind through academics, the heart through service wherein we are called to live out what we believe through charity. Finally, the soul is the home of faith. To meet this objective, through religion classes, and monthly

Masses, our school also participates in devotional prayers such as the Rosary, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the Stations of the Cross. We come to understand that religion is not just knowledge but ultimately a relationship, with God and with each other who are the Church.

H This letter may underline what we all want in life: happiness. We want the entire school, teachers, aids support staff, students and parents to be “happy” as members of this community. We try to do this for our faculty through development and spirituality days, yearly raises and opportunities for enrichment. We try to do this with the student body and the parents by fostering good morale through communication. Finally, with the help of class moms and the HSA, numerous activities are offered throughout the year where the sole purpose is to have fun.

O This refers to “our.” It’s not my school or yours but “ours.” At St. James School, we encourage everyone to be concerned not just about “my grades” and “my education” but also “our grades” and “our education.” This emphasis on “our” instead of “my” reminds us that we are called to use our gifts and talents not just for our advancement but for the benefit of others, too. That’s why we have programs like DARE, team sports, clubs, peer mentoring and student council.

L This letter stands for “life skills.” We at St. James School want to prepare you, not just for high school, but for life! So, we try to offer you skills that you will use throughout life, skills such as reading, writing, speaking and listening. These tools of communication are essential no matter where life takes you—so take these seriously and these will serve you well.

I This is the first letter in the word “inclusive.” Here at St. James School, we want all people, be these teachers, support staff, parents and students, to feel welcomed and

included in all our activities. Nobody should ever feel excluded. Why? Because Jesus` Gospel mandate to love our neighbor is at the core of who we are. If ever we find ourselves excluding people from our activities because they are not as academically gifted, athletically endowed or socially connected as we think that they should be, then we are no longer behaving in a Christian manner.

C This final letter of our acronym refers to "Christ-centered." From academics to social activities, from sporting events to the fine and performing arts, everything we do and everything we are must reflect "Christ." As Christians, we are first and foremost followers of Christ—as such, Jesus remains at the center of our school community. It is also Jesus who is the gauge by which we measure our strengths and areas in need of improvement. If we keep Jesus at the center of our school, we'll always have balance, justice, charity and a healthy environment which is conducive both to learning and Christian growth.

So, boys and girls, Mr. Kenny, teachers, aids and parents—thank you for being St. James School. And the next time anyone asks why you attend St. James School, remember that acronym, "CATHOLIC," because it should remind you that you are unique and you are loved! Congratulations and God bless you all.

Fr. Glenn