

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS MAKE A DIFFERENCE ...

As I sit down at my desk to write this article, it is the night before school starts here at Saint Charles. I am sure that most of the kids are lamenting the end of the summer while a lot of the parents are rejoicing that it's done! Many of us have good memories of Catholic schools. I think especially of that first day and new uniforms, polished shoes, "Manhattan Special" notebooks and waiting for the Pioneer Yellow school bus to take me and my sister to Our Lady of Good Counsel school.

Of course, waiting for us there at the other end were the "good sisters" who played (and still continue to play) such a great role in the Catholic education system. Yes, the nuns exerted discipline but that discipline was absolutely necessary in dealing with classes of 40 to 50 boys and girls!

Some months ago, I was talking to a classmate of mine from Monsignor Farrell who went to grammar school here at Saint Charles. He is a very successful lawyer now, but on the first day of school here at Saint Charles in September, 1965, he decided he didn't like it one bit. He strode out of the building and walked up Penn Avenue! Luckily, he was caught by one of the sisters and naturally, some predictable "consequences" followed and probably more at home that night!

But the point is that the discipline in the Catholic schools did not harm him one single bit. In fact, it contributed in no little way to his success in his life and career.

Recently, the Wall Street Journal had a very interesting article that was entitled, "The Catholic School Difference." The article describes a study that was conducted by a professor from the University of California, Michael Gottfried and a doctoral student by the name of Jacob Kirksey. What Gottfried and Kirksey did was to compare students in Catholic schools with those in public schools and some private schools. They discovered in their research something that was really not surprising.- Catholic school students exhibited less disruptive behavior.

The authors wrote that Catholic students were "More likely to control their temper, respect other's property, accept their fellow students ideas and to handle peer pressure." In a nutshell, the boys and girls who attend Catholic school had more self-discipline overall.

When children are self-disciplined and motivated, the school administration doesn't have to expend valuable time and energy in penalizing students. It's a "no brainer" that this results in better classroom environment which facilitates real learning. If a teacher has to constantly stop a lesson because of disruptive behavior on the part of some kids then the real aim of education is frustrated!

The truth is that Catholic schools do a great job in forming the whole person not only academically, but spiritually, socially and athletically as well. The proof that we do such a good job is that many charter and private schools have tried to replicate the discipline in our Catholic schools with positive results.

One of the major conclusions in the study was this: "Don't underestimate the power of religion to positively influence a child's behavior." How true. That's something that the Catholic Church has understood all along! I am very proud of our Catholic school here at Saint Charles. The students are very respectful, disciplined and also religious, The class day starts with prayers and we have school Masses and confessions on a regular basis.

Mr. J.C. Kiernan and his able staff of very hard working teachers do a great job in forming the boys and girls to be the leaders of tomorrow. Yes, Catholic schools do indeed make a difference and we didn't need a study to know that!

*Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome*