

Be true to your school – or better yet, its namesake

Dear Friends of Catholic Schools,

"Our school is named after God!"

That is what one of our kindergarten students exclaimed to his classmates one day. Apparently his class was learning about symbols and names, and some of his classmates remarked that the other schools in town had the same names as some of the symbols they were learning. His classmates seemed rather impressed by that. He wanted to be sure to let them know that their school was named after something even more important than a Kansas symbol. "Out of the mouths of babes," as they say!

I was reflecting on all the ways our Catholic schools are different from our public school counterparts during the recent national celebration of Catholic Schools Week. There is much talk in the news and in public education now about "college and career readiness" and the importance of career and technical education. On the surface, it may seem logical that we would want our children to be very well prepared to enter the workforce regardless of whether that is after high school or college. Of course, all the research on the effectiveness of Catholic schools shows that our graduates excel in their chosen fields, so we would certainly agree that college and career readiness is important.

However, I believe that the conversation regarding the end result of education is missing important elements. One element is simply practical. The reality of the last several decades is that adults make multiple job changes, some even career changes, during their lifetimes. It seems counter to reality to direct high school students into specific career tracks that may limit them in the future.

Another missing element is the importance of education in forming the human person to positively contribute to a democratic, just, and moral society. Without meaningful study of the history and culture of civilization, our students will have no context for understanding our current environment. Nor will they have the insight to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the future. To truly benefit our country, we must have citizens whose education has prepared them to contribute more to society than only economics.

The Church has been steadfast about the purpose of education, and we in Catholic schools do strive to prepare our students for their roles in this world. Thus, the benefits of Catholic schools for our country and our Church are immense. We have a more important goal for our students, though, and that is heaven. As long as we are true to our schools' namesakes, as our kindergarten friend reminds us, we should be continue to produce exceptional results... toward both goals!

Vaya con Dios!