

A clear view of the forest can guide us through the trees

Dear Friends of Catholic Schools,

Sometimes I find myself thinking, “Thank goodness Jim and I are not raising kids anymore!” The world seems more complex and, at times, troubling. Then I remember, “Wait – we have grandkids – 14 to be exact, ages 2-15,” so we cannot just “wash our hands” of the challenges of raising children in this world.

Jim and I often have conversations with our kids about how they grew up and how it affects how they are raising our grandchildren, and we have spoken with our kids’ friends about the very same topic. It seems that everyone agrees that family life today is too hectic. They agree that they long to have unscheduled days when they can be at home and simply play. However, they also agree that changing these circumstances is not as easy as it seems!

It occurred to me, though, that perhaps one solution could be to always remember our purpose as parents and teachers. I compare it to remembering to “see the forest” and not “let the trees” obscure the bigger picture. If we remember what our long term goal for our children is, I think it might help us make those daily decisions of how we spend our time as a family.

Long after our children were grown, I sent them a letter (well, actually an email!) that explained the guiding beliefs that Jim and I had when we were raising them, and I encouraged them to think about what was guiding them as parents. Jim’s and my beliefs were faith, each other, and family – in that order. I explained to them how those beliefs led us to insist that we go to Mass as a family, that we pray for one another, that we offer up Jim’s illness in prayer, that we sacrifice to send them to Catholic schools, that Jim and I remain “other centered” in our marriage, that we have family meals together, that we all go to each other’s activities, and that we welcome others into our home. This is not meant to imply that we always lived our lives in perfect accord with our beliefs – to claim that would be more than a stretch! However, I must say, as superintendent of Catholic schools, that sending our kids to Catholic schools played a tremendous role in helping us live out our family beliefs.

What is guiding you in raising your children? If, after reflection, you believe that changes are in order, I pray that you will have the wisdom and perseverance to make them!

¡Vaya con Dios!