

## Honors are meaningless if we're not forming our students

Dear Friends of Catholic Schools,

Recently, 7 packages arrived in our office. We were curious about the contents because we had not ordered anything that would have required shipping, and we did not recognize the return address. Much to our delight, what arrived were awards for 7 of our schools!

Of the total of 57 schools across the state of Kansas that earned the Governor's Achievement Award for being top-performing schools, Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas received 7. We had the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest number of schools receiving this recognition. From the press release from the state, we read that, "In order to receive a Governor's Award, schools had to receive building-level Assessment Performance Index scores in the top 80% in math and reading. Schools also had to be in the top 5% of elementary schools or high schools." In the past, we have had individual schools earn this award, but this is the first year where so many of our schools were honored.

Since then I have learned of multiple other awards our schools have received – 11 of our Catholic high school students have been named Kansas Governor's Scholars; one elementary school's Team America Rocket Challenge team, in its first year of existence, has been selected to participate in the national competition; numerous first places in the state music competition; debate and forensics teams qualifying for "post season" tournaments; Science Olympiad winners; robotics competition awards; National Merit scholars; various essay and speech contest winners; juried art exhibit winners; athletic honors; recognition for thousands of service hours; and more. In just about every category, our Catholic school students excel.

However, this recognition, while very nice, is not why we work so hard to help our students achieve. We try to focus on the most important aspect of any of our beings – the soul. I am reminded of a quote I read from Archbishop Chaput – "Real excellence is a quality of the soul." Winning first place honors and being recognized for service are exciting but also hollow if we are not properly forming the souls of our students.

In Catholic schools we also must be concerned about how many of students are prepared and encouraged to answer the call to a religious or priestly vocation; how many of our students continue to actively practice their faith as adults; and how many are joyful and charitable witnesses of the love of Christ in the world. Some of these are difficult to measure, and in the end, our Lord will be the ultimate judge, but I believe these temporal awards are, indeed, a reflection of our students' souls.

¡Vaya con Dios!