

Parents, teachers all grateful for Jesus' presence in the classroom

Dear Friends of Catholic Schools,

My sister who teaches first grade sent me a cartoon several years ago that I framed for my office. It is an illustration of 2 people sitting on a park bench when this fierce "swoosh" of wind suddenly blows by them. One turns to the other and asks, "What was that that just flew by?" The other replies, "Summer."

As I write this, students, teachers, and parents are settling into the routine of another school year, and I had the same feeling as those on the park bench – what happened to summer??! Perhaps you feel the same way!

This year I have been reflecting quite a bit about the reasons why parents and our great faculty and school leaders choose Catholic schools because I have been blessed recently with some inspiring encounters with parents and school staffs. I will share just a few:

Just this morning, I was told of a teacher who also had her own child in our schools. This teacher referred to her child as a "Perfect Wings" child because he had a form of Autism. The child has since graduated from a Catholic high school and has done very well, and the teacher/mom credits his experiences in our schools and the assistance of the Perfect Wings program for his success. She now is advocating for one of her classroom students who has a similar special need, saying "I know this student can learn here – look at my son!"

Recently, I was reading through material sent to me by a school leader. Included in the material was a description of the various circumstances of families whose students attend the school. I was humbled that families were so committed to keeping their children in Catholic schools despite job losses, illness, and changes in family circumstances. These parents also know the difference our schools can make in their children's lives, and I am so appreciative that our schools are able to work with families in so many challenging situations.

At our New Teacher Orientation, one new teacher was in tears, and when I asked her if she was ok, she told me, "These are tears of joy! I am so grateful to be able to teach in a place where Jesus is present!"

I am grateful that the members of our school communities – parents, teachers, and students – value His presence and see it in our schools. As we start another school year, I want to say thank you to everyone who supports Catholic schools. Please pray that we are guided by the Holy Spirit and the love of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

¡Vaya con Dios!