



Third Sunday of Ordinary Time
January 25, 2015 B

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

- **Step Up for Students Program**
- **Why Parents Love Ascension School**
- **Ascension’s Technology Program**
- **Letters from Two Catholic College Graduates**
- **Seven Thank You’s**

Step Up for Students Program. In 2001, the Florida Legislature created the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship (income-based scholarship) to assure that low-income children have learning options. Under the law, the scholarships are based on financial need, not how well your child does in school.

Since then, hundreds of thousands of low-income families in Florida have been able to place their child in a private school.

In this current academic year, the tuition cost at Ascension School for *Category One* families (Catholics who attend weekend Mass on a regular basis) is \$5,750 per child. For *Category Two* families (non-Catholics and Catholics who do not come to church regularly), the tuition cost is \$7,200 per child. The state pays up to \$5,272 per child. We are hoping the scholarship amount for next year will increase. The Parish Assistance for 74 students from July 2014 through December 2014 was \$112,019.94.

Free four-year old (VPK) program

Under the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program (VPK), a four-year old child can attend our school free.

Why parents love having their children at Ascension School

When school parents were asked what they love about having their children at Ascension School,

the following are only a few of the many positive e-mails Mr. Workman and I received.

We are truly blessed to be able to have our four daughters attend Ascension Catholic School. It is comforting to know that our children are in a loving and nurturing environment because of the amazing teachers and staff who truly care and have the best interest in our children. Most importantly, in addition to getting an excellent education, they are immersed in our Catholic faith where Christ is central and spoken about on a daily basis. We couldn't be happier.

Hector & Christina Babilonia

What we greatly appreciate about having our children at Ascension Catholic School is the safety measures put forth into keeping my children safe daily, the kindheartedness and love the teachers have for them, and the amazing Catholic rituals and studies they instill in them.

Angelica & Anthony Lopez

What I like best about having my son at Ascension Catholic School is that the faculty care for him as they would their own child.

Steve Audina

What I like best about having my children at Ascension Catholic School is that they are surrounded by people who love God and are happy to share that love. I am convinced that the reason my children's faith is so strong is because God is part of their ENTIRE day. Ascension Catholic School is more than just a school. It is a faith community!!

I firmly believe that their foundation at Ascension will lead my children to do God's work. When children are loved, happy, and feel secure—they can accomplish wonderful things!!

Diane Cassidy

Technology

It is imperative for students in today's world to be able to use the latest technology to become creative and critical thinkers who will make a positive impact on the world. In support of this goal, our school has a wide variety of tech tools available for students use.

- Projectors and Interactive SMART boards are in almost every room, and selected rooms have document cameras (as needed).
- This year we completed the addition of the audio enhancement and silent security system which are now in place in all rooms (Kindergarten through Grade 8). Research shows audio enhancement has a positive effect on reading and language growth, especially in the lower grades.
- Six new touchscreen laptops for Grades 3 through 5. This allows for the laptops to be moved and shared among these grades as needed for student work. Grades 2 and below have a bank of computers in their classrooms.
- Four mobile computer lab carts, each holding 30 touchscreen devices running Windows 8.1. Two of the carts hold Tablets and the other two hold Netbooks.
- Students use Microsoft Office 365 for email and file storage. They are allowed to download 5 full versions of Microsoft Office and Avast Anti-virus software.
- Computer instruction varies by grade level and include coding, typing, ethical and fair use of technology and social media, as well as basic computer use. Students also use the computers in most subject areas.

Anita Brady, who oversees our technology program, will be a *presenter* at the *National Conference for Catholic Education* this April.

Sharing from two Catholic college graduates

In a letter to the editor of the magazine *U.S. Catholic*, Brendan McGrath writes:

As a devout 23-year old Catholic who just graduated from Georgetown University and who

attended Catholic Elementary and Catholic High School, I am adverse to anything that could possibly lead to anything but wholehearted devotion to the Catholic School system. I believe that for education to be fully authentic, it must be permeated by religion, which for Catholics means Catholicism. True education cares for the whole person, and since our spiritual/religious dimension permeates our whole existence, body and soul, an education that is not religious is inherently incomplete. This doesn't mean that public schools aren't of value, certainly God's grace is at work in their students, and their teachers are doing God's work in building the kingdom as well. However, public schools operate on a reduced and qualitatively different level compared to Catholic schools, like a circle compared to a sphere. This would remain true even if all public schools were better academically than Catholic ones.

A few years ago, Terri Piatt wrote the following letter to the editors of the *Notre Dame Magazine*.

The meaning of education

Thank you for printing Peter Wicks' essay ("A Defense of My Life's Vocation"), which I read shortly after reading a Newsweek cover story entitled "Why College Should Take Only 3 Years." The contrast between the two viewpoints was startling. One side advocates eliminating "nonessential" courses and attending school year-round while the other reflects what higher education is ideally about, namely, learning how to think critically and having time to reflect and grow. Philosophy and the humanities are an important part of the well-rounded liberal arts education that every Notre Dame graduate receives, and this is part of what makes a degree from a top university like Notre Dame valuable.

I was an EE major and, like many engineering students, I felt that all of my required, nontechnical classes were a waste of time. Then I took Moral Problems, a philosophy class that changed my world view. It remains the best class I have ever taken. Since graduating I have learned time and again that while my engineering and math skills are strong, what really sets me apart from my fellow graduate students and co-workers is all those "useless" theology, philosophy and humanities

classes I was required to take. I have nothing but admiration for the scholars who devote themselves to these often undervalued areas.

I wonder, when it comes to the education of their children (elementary and high school), how many parents see the religious dimension as a “non-essential.” If the writer of the above is to be believed, the religious dimension of education is what produces the most lasting effect, the part that impacts a person’s whole worldview. I am so grateful that we at Ascension can say to more and more parents that their children can have a Catholic education even if they cannot afford our tuition costs.

It is very clear from the above two testimonies that a good education involves much more than academics. ***If we are interested in the soul and spirit of our children—the part of us that is immortal—then we will seek to do everything possible to nurture that dimension in our children’s lives.*** A Catholic school environment is a great place to do that. As stated above, in a Catholic school, faith permeates every subject and every part of a child’s day.

Let’s be convinced...

No school is perfect and that includes Catholic schools. No school has perfect principals, teachers or parents. Parents and students can have bad experiences in any school, including Catholic schools. Having said that, let us not falter in our conviction as regards the value of a Catholic school education.

All of us make decisions on how we want to spend our money. I hope that all of you interested in the future of Catholicism are convinced that supporting families seeking to send their children to a Catholic school is one of the *best ways* we can spend your money.

Seven thank you’s

I thank all the parents in our parish who have made the good choice of giving their children a Christ-centered education.

I thank grandparents who are helping their grandchildren have a Catholic education.

I thank all of you who contribute to the special *school envelope* found in your monthly package. This past calendar year of 2014, donations totaled \$69,178. The average monthly collection is \$5,800. If you are in a position to participate in this form of support to our school, I invite you to consider doing so. Investment in Catholic school education is an investment in the future of Catholicism.

I thank Hank Laneville and all our bingo workers for their dedication to our parish. Thursday night bingo revenue goes to the school. This year, bingo will contribute \$182,100 to the operation of the school.

I thank Sr. Joseph, our school Development Director, and all the dedicated school parents who work with her. Each year, their main fundraiser has been our annual *Gala Event* which last year netted \$58,000. This year’s *Gala Event is Saturday, March 28, 2015* in our school. Last year’s *Casino Night* turned out to be great fun and netted \$20,000. I thank all those individuals who make special donations to our school to help with miscellaneous special projects.

I thank Tom Knutson and his Thrift Store volunteers for their wonderful work in raising funds to serve the needy in our area. This year they are contributing \$48,000 to our Tuition Aid program.

Have a blessed week,

