



## Third Sunday in Ordinary Time C January 27, 2019

### Is the Catholic School system worth supporting even if many of its graduates no longer go to Church? Some responses

When we talk about the Catholic School system, especially during *Catholic Schools Week*, some if not many parents bemoan the fact that they sent their child/children to a Catholic School but they stopped going to Church. This is indeed a sad fact. But I strongly believe that as disheartening as it may be, it should not be a reason for us to weaken our support for the Catholic School system. Why? Because a Catholic School education gives a child a great start in life.

- ◆ It is always a plus to have a child in a school that begins the school day with prayer.
- ◆ It is always a plus to have a child in a school that has a weekday school Mass.
- ◆ It is always a plus to have a child in a school which has religious education as an integral part of the curriculum.
- ◆ It is always a plus to have a child in an educational atmosphere where a teacher can speak about God any time of the day and help to integrate faith and learning.
- ◆ It is always a plus to have a child in a school where the parish priest can visit the classrooms and talk about faith, and where children can ask Father any questions.
- ◆ It is always a plus to have a child in a school where children are taught to have compassion for the less fortunate members of society.

In addition to all of the above, Ascension has a great reputation for producing excellent academic results. Teachers at MCC and some public schools often remark that “Ascension students stand out academically.” This is always music in my ears when I hear it. More on the faith issue later.

### Parents share why they love having their children at Ascension

*We have had our children at ACS over the course of 11 years now, and it would take a book filled with stories to share all the wonderful moments and amazing memories that Ascension School and Parish have given our family.*

*I would say that from day one, when our daughter was going to begin kindergarten, we came to the school office to have a look around, we knew at that moment, that this was the place for us. We have felt like part of an extended family over these years at Ascension.*

*The parents and children are part of a beautiful faith filled community that just can't be easily duplicated anywhere. As parents, we have all watched each other's children grow in their academics, sports and faith; we have cheered on the triumphant goals, and yet have reached out our arms to hug, cry and give support when it was needed.*

*The teachers and coaches challenge our children to do their best, and they care about their future. We are fortunate to be a part of a school that teaches children to respect themselves and others, and to know that each person is special in God's eyes.*

*Our priests deliver the homily at weekly school Mass and the children love to sing and proclaim the Scriptures. This hour allows our children to reflect on their faith, other people, and their own paths in life. This is also a time families can sit and partake in the school Mass together.*

*If you are thinking about sending your child to ACS, you will never be disappointed, and it's worth more than every penny.*

The Bruno Family

*Perfection may not be of this world, but Ascension Catholic School sure comes close. Our seventh-grade son, Nicolas, is thriving academically, socially and spiritually at Ascension. He is surrounded by truly caring teachers and staff who demonstrate their faith on a daily basis, and by boys and girls who, like Nicolas, are trying their best to navigate a complex and often chaotic world.*

*Ascension is there every step of the way, guiding the children on their journey. The music program is tops, and where else do middle school students dive into*

*Edgar Allan Poe with such enthusiasm, or explore germs at the most minute scientific level?*

*As parents, we feel blessed to have found Ascension Catholic School for our son - and wholeheartedly recommend it.*

Stefano Coledan & Marcia Dunn  
(Cocoa Beach)

### Some Ascension School stats

- ◆ Currently, we have 466 students in our Pre-K3 thru 8th grade.
- ◆ 107 students are in our school through the *Step Up For Students* program which pays \$6,550+per student (July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019: \$681,400 in scholarship money received). 25% of students attending Catholic schools in the Diocese of Orlando benefit from the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship. Out of the 25% who attended elementary and/or high school, 100% graduated and 97% went on to pursue college level studies.
- ◆ 61 students receive McKay money from the state, the amount of which varies according to the needs of the child (July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019: \$399,297 scholarship money received).
- ◆ 6 students are on the Gardiner program for a total of \$45,200 in scholarships. The Gardiner program is like the McKay program, but works a little differently financially.
- ◆ This year our school will receive \$1,125,978 in tuition government aid.
- ◆ 49 students received \$96,608 in tuition assistance from the Parish in fiscal year 2018-2019. These are families who did not qualify for *Step Up*.
- ◆ In the last fiscal year, the Thrift Store gave \$52,000 to the school to help with tuition for needy families.
- ◆ Donations through the special yellow school envelopes came to \$71,800 for calendar year 2018. [Note: Donations for this purpose should be made payable to **Ascension School**, not the Parish.]
- ◆ This past year's Gala netted \$120,917
- ◆ This past year's Casino Night netted \$17,530.
- ◆ Private donations totaled \$11,330 in 2018.

### Technology

It is imperative for students in today's world to be able to use cutting edge 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 technological tools available for students' use.

- Projectors and Interactive SMART boards are in every room, and selected rooms have document cameras (as needed).
- Our computer lab was upgraded with 30 new personal computers running Microsoft Windows 10.
- Classrooms VPK through Grade 5 have 5 to 6 computers in their room for students' daily use.
- Two mobile computer lab carts, each holding 30 touchscreen tablets running Windows 8, support the school. A new cart was purchased last year with 30 new iPads for use in the classrooms. 2017 saw the addition of one more cart of 32 laptops running Windows 10 which brings the total to 4 carts available to any classroom.
- Students use Microsoft Office 365 for email and file storage. They are allowed to download 5 full versions of Microsoft Office 2016 and Avast Anti-virus software at no additional cost to students.
- Computer instruction varies by grade level and includes coding/programming, keyboarding, ethical and fair use of technology and social media, as well as basic computer use. Students also use the computers in most subject areas.
- There are after-school programs that include Google Computer Science designed for Grades 4-5, which inspires students to create programs with technology and CyberPatriots; and for Grades 6-8, where students learn how to secure and protect computers and networks against cyber threats and compete on a national level with other schools.
- Our school is equipped with an audio enhancement and silent security system which is now in place in all rooms (VPK through Grade 8, library, music, art, computer lab and the gymnasium). Teachers may research shows that audio enhancement has a positive effect on reading and language growth, especially in the lower grades. This year, we upgraded the intercom system and bell system in order to provide more functionality for online programming for middle school schedules and bell systems adding technology to warn school-wide of any emergency situation. Additionally, we now have an intercom system for the principal and office to call into and have two-way communication with the teacher and classroom, should the need arise.

Ascension Catholic School is known for having a rigorous academic curriculum and an outstanding fine arts program in a faith-filled, nurturing, caring school

environment. Students at Ascension learn and strengthen their faith, not only through the study of religion, but also in the way they work, study, treat each other, and are treated by the faculty and staff. Our Catholic values are infused throughout a student's stay at Ascension. Our Reading and Language Arts curriculum focuses on developing the fundamentals of reading and language, as well as the ability to analyze and manipulate this symbiotic partnership. The curriculum is aligned with the key elements of language arts standards in writing, reading, speaking, listening, and research. Our goal is for students to demonstrate proficiency in language arts, further inspiring exploration across curriculum and developing their love and appreciation for reading. The objective of our mathematics program is for students to show mastery not only of basic computational skills but to also apply mathematical problem-solving to real life situations. Our progressively more complex curriculum maintains focus of the numeric, algebraic, geometric, statistic, measurement, and probabilistic reasoning at each developmental level. (For more information on our curriculum, including science, social studies, foreign language, please visit our website or arrange a personal tour.) We are well known for meeting our students at their current level and helping them grow to become more successful.

Please share the flyer on Ascension School's upcoming Open House with school parents. Especially remember to say:

- ◆ Pre K 4 is free
- ◆ *Step Up* (a government program) pays \$6,550 for each child on a particular economic level
- ◆ Government Aid through McKay (\$399,297 total)

### **If Catholic Schools are so good, why do so many of our graduates fall away from Church**

This is a difficult and challenging question. There are several reasons why graduates of Catholic Elementary School and High School do not continue to practice their faith. We live more and more in a secular culture that excludes God and Christian values from its discourse. Despite the pagan atmosphere we live in, there are many young Catholics strong in the practice of their faith. The following are three factors that enable or diminish a child's chances of continuing in his/her Catholic faith.

- ◆ *The practice level of parents.* Some parents are strong in the practice of their Catholic faith. Their children may be very involved in weekend sports, but they always make sure attendance at Mass is a part of their weekend. Some parents are well able to engage

their children in faith issues. On the other hand, there are parents who are weak and who easily allow other worldly things to distract them from Church and godly values, e.g., sports replace Sunday Mass. There are no easy answers but we should look for answers.

### **Junior High and High School Ministry**

- ◆ Some parents make sure their children are actively engaged in their parish's High School Ministry. They make sure their teens attend retreats and go on mission trips. Other parents give their teens a pass on High School Ministry especially if they do not want to go. Active involvement in our Junior High (Edge) Program greatly increases a young person's chances of being involved in our High School program.
- ◆ Some parents make sure that their college-bound children become involved in the Catholic Campus Ministry. This ministry helps the young embrace an *adult* Catholic faith. Many college students also attend retreats and go on mission trips. Along the way, parents of these children (becoming young adults) continue to practice their faith. Many attend retreats to nurture their faith.

In all faith formation, the goal is to help the young person to have his/her personal encounter with Christ. Needless to say, this cannot be forced. We must always remember that the twelve Apostles had the perfect teacher and perfect model of faith and yet one of them freely choose another dark path. Our job is to keep *sowing the seeds* and *watering the plants*; the rest is up to Jesus. He alone can touch and change hearts. The question for us is: Are we doing the best we can to model good example, and are we doing everything we can to steer our children in the right direction?

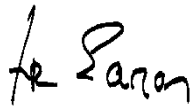
### **Lots of Thank You's**

To operate a school like ours and keep up our high standards, we need the co-operation of many people. I am most grateful to:

- ◆ **Parents** who sacrifice to have their child/children in our school
- ◆ **Grandparents** who are helping their grandchildren have a good Catholic education
- ◆ **Our very dedicated school staff:** Principal Anita Brady, Vice Principal and teacher Donna Violi, our teachers and our administrative staff. Daily, these wonderful people create a very welcoming, faith-filled, and safe environment for our school children and parents who visit our school.

- ◆ **Ms. Victoria Dunn**, our School Development Director
- ◆ **John Casco** who heads up the Thrift Store
- ◆ All who use the *Yellow School Envelope* to support our school. This calendar school year, \$71,800 was received in donations.
- ◆ All who give *private donations* to the school, all involved in school fundraisers, and all who volunteer at the school.
- ◆ Brian Carley and his dedicated maintenance staff who help to maintain the visible aspects of our School and Parish.

Have a blessed week,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Aaron". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.