



## The Value of Catholic School Education – Looking Back Over 65 Years

When asked if I might compose a short reflection on Catholic education, it prompted me to revisit my lifelong connection to Catholic schools. My journey began with my own 16+ years as a student in Catholic schools, continued as I sent my three children to Catholic institutions, and further deepened during the 15 years I worked in the business office of a Catholic university. Today, two of my grandchildren attend St. Elizabeth of the Trinity school. My experience with Catholic schools, now spanning 65 years, fills me with gratitude for the lessons and values I received.

The Catholic school model has evolved over the decades, but its foundation of academic excellence, faith-driven principles, and strong ethics has not only persisted but flourished. These core values remain central to the Catholic education experience, as demonstrated by our own parish school motto of “Wisdom, Worship, Works.”

My introduction to Catholic education began in 1961 when I started 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Through the next 16+ years, I was a student and graduate of St. Angela elementary school, Mother Theodore Guerin High School, and De Paul University. This quality and ethics-based education, along with the values instilled by my parents, has profoundly influenced who I am today.

Back in that day, the Catholic school model was one that relied largely on the religious order Sisters, who served for minimal compensation. Tuition was nominal due to the Sisters’ dedication. Classrooms normally numbered 40-50 students and the style of teaching was highly structured. The Sisters taught ... and we learned.

When it was time for our children to begin their schooling in the early 90’s, my husband and I chose our St. Tarcissus parish school. In time, they moved on to Regina Dominican and Quigley Prep and, ultimately, to Loyola University Chicago. Tuition was no longer nominal; class sizes a bit smaller. Their student experience was certainly more interactive and participatory. They were challenged to think on a broader scale. Yet, an academically excellent and ethics-based education remained at the heart of their studies at every level.

Fast forward another 30 years, and now two of my grandchildren have begun their formal faith and education journey here at St. Elizabeth of the Trinity. Yes, it’s the same school building that my own children attended, but it is a new beginning, both for the students and for our parish. Our school is a vital ministry of St. Elizabeth parish, and continues to offer academic excellence, caring and dedicated leadership and faculty, along with a faith-based focus on developing the whole child.

In this Easter season of renewal, our parish school stands as a living symbol of the continuation and constancy of superior academics and faith-based education for yet another generation. In a world that eagerly awaits their gifts, our young students are the future of our parish and our Church.

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