

PASTOR'S CORNER

In Gratitude for Catholic Schools

As many of you know, I was not raised in the Catholic Church; rather, I was raised a Presbyterian. Religion in our family was meant to be a comforting tradition and little more. However, I did go to religious education classes at the church on most Sunday's that I would attend with my parents. What I remember were banal Bible stories, paper cut-outs, some singing (which I liked) and, when in the Teen Youth Group, some agonizing attempts on the part of the adult leaders to make Jesus "relevant" to our lives (e.g., such gems as: 'you need to take Jesus out of the church, put bell bottoms on him, and visualize him on a motorcycle!') I'm sure they meant well, but the end result was an educational experience that served up fake food instead of the real thing.

I was, like most Protestants, educated in the public schools. At the time (before Proposition 13), the schools in California were the finest in the nation, so I benefited from the very best secular education our tax dollars could produce. I went to college and received a Bachelor's degree in history from the University of Minnesota. When history failed to produce employment, I received post-baccalaureate training in Business Administration and a Master's Degree in Accounting (taxation) from Portland State. All of this led to qualification as a CPA and a 15 year career as a tax accountant. I enjoyed my time as an accountant and was able to provide for the needs of myself and my son Shawn.

Not once in my entire academic career of almost 20 years in secular institutions did I receive the type of education that would in any way provide me with the proper philosophical and theological perspective that one needs in order to consider oneself an 'educated' Christian. I knew a bunch of stuff and I was qualified for a job in a specific field, but I didn't know much more about real life than what a trained monkey needs to know in order to get a banana.

All of that changed at Mount Angel Seminary. Within two weeks of matriculating at the Seminary, I realized just how much basic stuff I didn't know and rarely even thought about. What did I really believe about the nature of the universe? How can I really 'know God' in my life? What does the incarnation really imply about human life? And so on. All religious education starts with philosophy and Mount Angel followed this guideline to a tee.

Catholic education's greatest gift is to provide an intellectual and experiential exposure to the phenomenon of religious practice and experience. Constant updating in a curriculum of sacramental, scriptural and pastoral education is therefore critical in the early grades. Children must be taught who they were created to be and who they now are. They must be taught about the fall of man and the reality of sin. They must come to appreciate the redemption accomplished by Christ and the formation of his Church and the gift of God's saving Sacraments. They must know of the dynamic interrelationship between the natural and the supernatural; between earth and heaven; between their life now and the eternal life towards which they are moving and within which they are even now participating.

All of these things are done, in greater complexity and specificity, at both St. Therese and our Catholic High Schools. Religion is not an 'add-on' at these schools; it is the primary reason they exist. If not one student goes on to college, but all leave having been deepened in their relationship with Christ, then we have been successful. On the contrary, if all of our students become Rhodes scholars and successful physicians but drift into a moribund Christianity, then we have dismally failed them.

The strength of our school is that our new and dynamic principal, Joy Hunt along with the entire school staff all agree with this assessment and structure their curriculum design accordingly. We are very lucky to have such dedicated educational leaders and such talented and serious teachers, helpers and assistants.

Only once per year do we pause to thank God for the existence of our Catholic schools and all the fine folks that run them and help us provide our children with the best in Catholic religious education. We can be grateful that their charges will not just go on to become good students in college or in life, but that so many continue with their faith, even in the midst of societal indifference and resistance. I truly wish I had been educated in such an intellectually and spiritually vibrant environment as a child, for it would have saved me many years of complacency and self-satisfaction with mere 'educated ignorance.' Thank God, these school children entrusted to us can receive so much more!

Fr. Stephen Geer

Ordinary Time

Day	Date	Time	Observance	Mass Intention
VIGIL	Jan 27	5:00 pm	Vigil of the Sunday Eucharist	Joanna Kong +
SUNDAY	Jan 28	9:00 am	The Eucharist of Our Lord Jesus Christ (The Holy Rosary will be prayed in the chapel at 8:30 am)	Missa pro populo
		11:30 am	The Eucharist of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Catholic Schools Week is celebrated at this Mass!)	School children, parents & staff
Monday	Jan 29	8:30 am	No service	
Tuesday	Jan 30	10:00 am	Funeral Mass	June Lagler +
Wednesday	Jan 31	8:30 am	St. John Bosco, Priest	Henry Chieu Nguyen +
Thursday	Feb 1	10:00 am	Ferial weekday	Millie Susnjara +
Friday	Feb 2	8:30 am	The Presentation of the Lord	Tom Lewandowski +
Saturday	Feb 3	8:30 am	St. Blaise, Bishop & Martyr (The Holy Rosary will be prayed in the chapel at 8:00 am)	STWA
			<u>Readings for the Sunday Mass:</u> Job 7.1-4, 6-7; Psalm 147; 1 Cor 9.16-19, 22-23; Mark 1.29-39	
VIGIL		5:00 pm	Vigil of the Sunday Eucharist (ACA Commitment weekend)	Joanna Kong +
SUNDAY	Feb 4	9:00 am	The Eucharist of Our Lord Jesus Christ (The Holy Rosary will be prayed in the chapel at 8:30 am) (ACA Commitment weekend)	Tom Lewandowski +
		11:30 am	The Eucharist of Our Lord Jesus Christ (ACA Commitment weekend)	Missa pro populo