

People of faith, touching lives and forming the future

Two thousand years ago, an itinerant son of a carpenter from the sticks, who gained notoriety for referring to God as *Abba* (Daddy), spoke with powerful words, touched people's lives and changed the world forever.

It is this Jesus, whom we proclaim: *"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands concerns the Word of life--for this life was made visible; we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you, the eternal life that was with the Father and was made visible to us--what we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."* (1 John 1-3) Catholic schools, since their origin, have sought to share this powerful message of faith, to touch people's lives with its hope and transform the present into a civilization of love. Catholic schools have sought to form persons at every level of their being to know, to love and to serve the Lord here on earth, so that they may experience the blessed happiness of His presence in eternity. This is our task. This is our awesome task.

The cynical prophets of secularism will tempt us to believe that Catholic parochial schools are something of the past, financial black holes, or even, a waste of time, energy and money. Call me either idealistic or naïve, but I do not believe such nonsensical ignorance. I do not believe it, because I am a product of the sacrificial love of my parents, the parish priests, the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth and the lay teachers and staff that formed the community of learning that taught me not only the three R's, but more significantly, about what life and love really mean: the on-going lesson of moving from narcissistic self-centeredness to Eucharistic self-giving. Is there anything more valuable in which we might invest our own time, energy and financial resources than in providing our children with the fundamental tools to engage this world – so different than the one in which I grew up – with its myriads of temptations and empty promises?

The Servant of God, Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores dabo vobis* (25 March 1992), constructs priestly formation upon four pillars: the human, the spiritual, the intellectual and the pastoral. The genius of this document emerges from the fact that these four pillars serve as the basis upon which all Catholic education is founded. Catholic schools are not simply academic institutions; rather they are communities that form free persons with immortal souls in the Catholic faith, the sciences, the liberal and fine arts, as well as in the practice of service. This is what Jesus would do! This is what Jesus did! This is what we need to do, if we wish to remain faithful to Him and our mission. Let us re-commit ourselves to this awesome task of love.



Faith

Values

Prayer

Service

Discipline