

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 23, 2018

For the last few weeks the Sunday gospel has been from the gospel of Mark. One of the things that keeps coming up in Mark is what scholars call the messianic secret. It says that he began a journey through Galilee but did not wish anyone to know about it. Evidently, he was concentrating on his inner circle. And he was very clear with them that “the Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise.”

The gospel concludes today by Jesus taking a child, placing it in their midst, and putting his arms around it, he said to them, “whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me; and whoever receives me receives not me but the one who sent me.”

Today we are going to concentrate on our inner circle and we are going to focus on our children. In our parishes we put by far the largest part of our resources into our children, especially our Catholic schools. Catholic schools are the flagship of our evangelical effort. They are our number one apostolic ministry. Our Catholic Schools are the most comprehensive expression of our faith in depth and in scope. Our complicated world exposes our children to grave and serious elements at a very early age. Violence, pornography and a plethora of twisted ideas, plus broken homes and even homeless children make it all the more imperative that these children be surrounded by a faith based environment. Our public schools are doing a fantastic job with a formidable task. But their hands are tied in an area which is fundamental to human growth and that is the spiritual formation of our children. Along with academic excellence our catholic schools address our children’s spiritual needs which are at the root of their sense of security and hope.

It is most important that we especially speak about the Catholic education of our children at a time of great scandal in the church. We need to speak to these issues and not only speak but do something about them. Having said that I would submit to you that the most solid and efficacious response to the scandal that is in the church and in all of society is addressed by our Catholic school effort more than any other single work.

Here at Sacred Heart and St. Alexanders we have a wonderful religious ed program. With the very limited time and structure that is available to them, our volunteer teachers first goal is to recruit for our catholic schools. It is absolutely impossible to do justice to the teaching of our Catholic faith in the time of one or two hours a week.

Because of the Wisconsin voucher system, the financial challenges of sending your children to catholic school are less. It still involves much sacrifice and commitment. In Nekoosa and Port Edwards there is more travel time required, there are still financial obligations, but most at issue, I feel, is a greater accountability to our faith on the part of the parents as well as the children. Sending our children to Catholic school calls us all to task. It calls us to make decisions which are not always expedient in the short term but priceless for all eternity.

It is important that we routinely review and evaluate why we do what we do. Catholic schools are the best deal in town. Our Catholic schools are allies with parents in preparing our children to build a better world. Catholic Schools are our number one apostolic ministry. We put more money, time, and personnel into Catholic Education than in any other ministry. It is where we draw the line and confront the ideologies that endanger us.

It is in Assumption Catholic Schools that we respond most completely to our Lord's mandate to 'go forth and teach all nations...' Nowhere will you find a more comprehensive formation of the whole person. It is a total program that prepares our youth in depth and scope, in spirit and in mind.

Catholic Schools are more needed than ever before. Our modern environment demands that we have confident, articulate, and vibrant members of the Church, capable of addressing the complex issues of our time in the light of faith. At ACS this new generation of parishioners is being nurtured and prepared academically and spiritually, growing strong in body, soul, and intellect.

Besides this, we have a lot of fun. If it isn't fun, it isn't learning. The greatest sign of the presence of God is joy. This spirit is radiated in the classroom, on the football field and basketball court, in concerts and plays and countless other high energy activities. Vince Lombardi referred to it as 'the fire in the belly'. As Pastor of two

of the participating parishes of ACS, I am very proud of our students, parents, teachers and staff and all who make this great work a reality.