

Cycle C 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Sunday January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019

This week throughout our nation the Catholic Church celebrates Catholic Schools Week. In the United States Catholic Schools have been and continue to be an important part of the American Catholic experience. In the middle to late 1800's the Church in the United States recognized the necessity of Catholic Schools especially in the parishes. The public schools for their part did not meet the religious needs of Catholic families. Furthermore, due to the Anti-Catholic sentiments that were occurring, handing on the Catholic faith was a challenge. So, the bishops responded during The Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884. The bishops called for every parish to establish a parish school, and that the first purpose of a Catholic School is to hand on the faith to the next generation. Handing on faith in Jesus Christ and His Church is still the main mission of every parish school today.

The handing on of the faith in Jesus Christ and His Church takes place every day in our classrooms. However, the principal day of handing on the faith happens right here in the church every Sunday. Sunday worship is the source of our spiritual nourishment each and every week, and it is the summit of our worship each and every week. Sunday worship is the foundation and pinnacle of Catholic Education.

Our Catholic Schools help each and every student to learn that they are a part of something greater than themselves. As St. Paul reminds us today: **“As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body though many, are one body, so also Christ.”** We are all part of the One Body of Christ. To be part of the one body means that all of us have a part to play in the spiritual works of mercy, and corporal works of mercy of the Church. This is a hallmark of Catholic education that young people are given the opportunity to grow in the spiritual works of mercy and corporal works of mercy, while at the same time receiving a top notch academic education.

St. Paul’s words to us today conclude with a list of designations in the Church, from apostles, to teachers, to mighty deeds. Parents carry out mighty deeds as they hand on faith to their children through religious education at home and sacrifice for Catholic education. And we must not forget those families who hand on the faith at home and while unable to afford Catholic education bring their children to Sunday religious education. So, parents are given the opportunity to share in mighty deeds as they hand on faith, in Jesus Christ and His Church, to the next generation. This handing on of the faith is supported by the Second Vatican Council, **“Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators.”**

We can find purpose and meaning today for religious education for both children and adults as we heard a portion of the Prologue to Luke's Gospel. Luke addressed his gospel to Theophilus. Theophilus means friend of God. We all want to be and are called to be friends of God. This friendship with God grows through baptism, Confirmation, First Eucharist, Matrimony, or Religious life, or Priesthood or the chaste single life, all the while living out the spiritual works of mercy and corporal works of mercy of the Church. Friendship with God culminates with being a saint in heaven. We are all made for more than just this world. We are all made to be saints in heaven. Handing on the Catholic faith to the next generation through Sunday worship, families and our Catholic Schools; is ultimately oriented to bringing friendship with God to its fulfillment as a saint in Heaven!