

# *A letter from Fr. Behrend*

In an age of information overload, Catholic schools must be especially attentive in their instruction to strike the delicate balance between human experience and understanding. Catholic educators do not want their students to say, "We had the experience but missed the meaning."

Knowledge and understanding are far more than the accumulation of information. T. S. Eliot puts it just right: "Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?" Catholic schools do far more than convey information to passive students. They aspire to teach love for wisdom, orienting each student "to desire learning so much that he or she will delight in becoming a self-learner." This is lived out through the STREAM (Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Arts, Math) certification that we possess (one of just a few schools in the Diocese of Cleveland.)

Intrinsically related to the search for wisdom is another idea frequently repeated in Vatican teaching: the confidence that the human mind, however limited its powers, can come to a knowledge of truth. This conviction about the nature of truth is too important for Catholics to be confused about. Unlike skeptics and relativists, Catholic educators share a specific belief about truth: that, to a limited but real extent, it can be attained and communicated to others. Catholic schools take up the daunting task of freeing boys and girls from the insidious consequences of what Pope Benedict XVI has called the "dictatorship of relativism" – a dictatorship that cripples all genuine education. Catholic teachers are to cultivate in themselves and develop in others a passion for truth that defeats moral and cultural relativism. They are to educate "in the truth."

Pope John Paul II pinpointed the importance of having a correct grasp of truth if the Catholic Church's educational efforts are to bear fruit:

The greatest challenge to Catholic education in the United States today, and the greatest contribution that authentically Catholic education can make to American culture, is to restore to that culture the conviction that human beings can grasp the truth of things, and, in grasping that truth, can know their duties to God, to themselves and their neighbors. . . .The contemporary world urgently needs the service of educational institutions that uphold and teach that truth is "that fundamental value without which freedom, justice, and human dignity are extinguished" [Veritatis Splendor, 4].

Closely following papal teaching, the Holy See's documents on schools insist that education is about truth – in both its natural and its supernatural dimensions:

The school considers human knowledge as a truth to be discovered. In the measure in which subjects are taught by someone who knowingly and without restraint seeks the truth, they are to that extent Christian. Discovery and awareness of truth leads man to the discovery of Truth itself.

While Catholic schools conform to government-mandated curricula, they implement their programs with an overall religious orientation. Such a perspective includes criteria such as "confidence in our ability to attain truth, at least in a limited way – a confidence based not on feeling but on faith . . . [and] the ability to make judgments about what is true and what is false." Unwavering commitment to truth has a home here at Saint Rita.

Catholic School blessings! Be encouraged, we are all journeying with you. I pray our Lord richly blesses you. Always remember that I love you, there is no way I will ever love you less, and I will continue to pray for you every day. ~ Fr. Behrend