

The beauty of Catholic education is its formation.

Love ONE ANOTHER

BY: ARCHBISHOP JEROME E. LISTECKI



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January 30, 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This week we celebrate Catholic Schools Week (January 28-February 3). As Shepherd of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, I voice my gratitude for all who have supported and continue to support Catholic education. Our society has a short memory and often lumps religious education into the category of private schools. However, Catholic schools are not private schools. Catholic schools have educated when society had no ability or means to provide for the education of its citizens.

The various congregations of our religious sisters courageously educated often at the sacrifice of their own well-being out of the love for Christ and His Church. Historically in America, there has always been a distrust of Catholicism. Yet the mission of the Church served the society and provided for the welfare of not only Catholics, but all who were in need through hospitals, orphanages, social welfare, and schools.

I am prejudiced when it comes to Catholic education because I'm a product of it. Embedded into my psyche was a demand that I consider my responsibility to the men and women of my community. They instructed me to love this country and reminded me that I was blessed to be a part of this great democracy. My Catholic education not only formed me as a good Catholic, but also shaped me as a good citizen.

Now as School Choice becomes more and more an option for educational entrepreneurs, Catholic schools, as well as other religious schools, are often merged with other entities and presented as just another option. Yet Catholic schools predate public schools. The beauty of Catholic education is its formation.

I have often said that you are freer in your expression in a Catholic school than you are in a public

school. In a Catholic school, you can worship, you can pray, and you can discuss and debate about God's existence, exercising your first amendment freedom not limited by secular biases.

As I celebrate Mass at our schools, I emphasize the gratitude that we all should have for our administrators, lay teachers, staff, priests, and pastors. They continue the great tradition of those who were pioneers in our Catholic schools, and make personal sacrifices by offering their lives in service to the community.

I also express my gratitude to the families whose dollars pay a portion of the tuition cost to educate, and to the parishioners who make contributions in order to make our parish schools viable – now and for generations to come. My hope and prayers are that today's Catholic school students will do so for others when the torch is passed by sending their children to Catholic schools, never forgetting those who have sacrificed for their success.

This week, I will especially offer a prayer for the religious sisters who were my teachers, that God will reward them for their patience in teaching little Jerome ListECKi, that he should follow Jesus' words and LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Jerome E. ListECKi
Archbishop Of Milwaukee

