



## WEEKLY LETTER FROM MONSIGNOR KEN

This week is Catholic Schools Week, an opportunity to focus on and reflect upon the vital importance and influence of Catholic education. Over the years, Catholic schools have had a profound effect upon our culture. While the practical realities of economics have made the existence of Catholic schools more difficult, that influence and legacy continue, as evidenced by our own St. Mary Academy.

You may remember during those difficult days of COVID those signs by the hospital and nursing homes: HEROES WORK HERE. How appropriate that was. Well, we should put that same sign outside of every Catholic School! Catholic school teachers are a special breed. They stand on the shoulders of countless religious who taught for many years with very little salary. It was their vocation. Lay people cannot make that same commitment, but they make a great sacrifice as most Catholic schools cannot compete with public schools, although maybe one day if we ever have school choice! A Catholic school is a great environment in which to teach, but it is a ministry, a special calling to further the vital mission of the Church to educate our children in the Faith. Yes, at St. Mary Academy and every Catholic school, Heroes Work Here!

As we proudly say, St. Mary Academy is a special place that teaches children to embrace the influence of God in their daily lives. The children develop a stronger understanding of their Catholic faith and continue to learn, grow, love and serve well into their adult lives.

While we are proud of our academics, we are even more so of our living and promoting the role of faith in the lives of the children. One special way besides daily prayer, religion classes and Liturgies, is STREAM Fridays, which incorporate Religion into this contemporary and holistic approach, including science, technology, English with reading and writing, arts, and math.

Interestingly and appropriately as we enter this week, although many may not be aware, last November, Pope Leo declared St. John Newman to be both co-patron of Catholic education and a Doctor of the Church. Newman, a convert to Catholicism from the Church of England was an English cardinal, scholar, poet and theologian. His theological contributions had a major impact on modern Catholic thought, and his presence in England helped re-legitimize Catholicism after centuries of repression.

Here are five quotes that reflect St. John Cardinal Newman's thoughts on Catholic education. 1. "Knowledge is capable of being its own end." Knowledge is, of course, useful, but it is also an end in itself. True education should capture a child's natural gift of wonder and curiosity and help develop them. 2. "All knowledge forms one whole, because its subject-matter is one." While it is convenient and practical to separate education into different categories, knowledge itself is one whole. It resides in one Truth, which is God. 3. "Theology is a branch of knowledge." This is essential. It not only means that religion is a legitimate pursuit, but that education is incomplete without it. 4. "A cultivated intellect, because it is a good in itself, brings with it a power and a grace to every work and occupation it undertakes." Good education affects the whole person, and helps them develop and ultimately discover their own God-given vocation. 5. "The heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but through the imagination." This is dear to me. As you may recall, I wrote a book, *The Cloud People*. One of my main motivations was my belief in the need for children to positively develop their imaginations. John Newman would agree! While it is a grammar school, I see all of those points incorporated in the philosophy and culture of St. Mary's Academy.

In recent years, there has been much discussion and controversy surrounding education, with WOKE and DEI agendas. Underneath all of that chatter is the absolute importance of educating our children, which we know must include Faith. For this reason, we are also committed to our wonderful Religious Formation Program to shape our children in their Faith. I still remember the "old days" when there was a sad and unnecessary division between Catholic school kids and those in public schools. All need to be raised in the Faith, which includes a Catholic school, Religious Formation, but especially in the home. In the ongoing effort to influence culture, Catholic Schools continue to serve a special role in that mission. Thank you for your continuing support of our St. Mary Academy. It does involve an economic sacrifice, but our children and their souls are worth every penny. Thank you.

**"Hold fast to instruction, never let it go; keep it, for it is your life." (Proverbs 4:13)**