

Defining Characteristics of Catholic Schools

1. Centered in the Person of Jesus Christ

Catholic education is rooted in the conviction that Jesus Christ provides the most comprehensive and compelling example of the realization of full human potential. (The Catholic School, 34, 35) In every aspect of programs, life, and activities, Catholic schools should foster personal relationship with Jesus Christ and communal witness to the Gospel message of love of God and neighbor and service to the world, especially the poor and marginalized. (Miller, 2006, pp. 25–26)

Narrative Summary

Founded by Fr. Jean Pierre Médaille in 1610, the Sisters of St. Joseph established St. George Catholic School. St. George Catholic School is rich with traditions that are embedded with the teachings of Jesus Christ and our Catholic faith. St. George's current Pastor, Father Mike Schatzle is one of the school's greatest assets. Father Mike truly exemplifies the teachings of Christ through his words, actions and deeds. His life is a living reflection of Gospel values and his ever presence on campus is a shining example for St. George students.

One of the cornerstones of St. George Catholic School is social outreach. As reported in the AdvancEd Defining Characteristics Survey of April 2013, approximately 90% of faculty, students and families agree with this statement. Just as Jesus did, the St. George School community realizes the importance of helping others. Each month during the school year, St. George students actively participate and support a service project. Projects focus on writing to the Church parish elderly, raising money for the sick, and/or collecting items for the needy. New this year, student council members have been added to the Service Project Committee in an effort to increase student participation.

According to the AdvancEd Defining Characteristics Survey of April 2013, one hundred percent of faculty, families and students agree that St. George Catholic School enriches the personal relationships students have with Christ and is reflected throughout the school curriculum. Students attend Mass weekly, participate in class Mass twice a year, reconciliation twice a year in preparation for Christmas and Easter, a yearly retreat, recitations of the Rosary and Stations of the Cross. 4th grade students participate in a religion fair which focuses on the saints and 7th – 8th grade students are required to participate in a service hour program. Class Masses are particularly special as they provide an opportunity for students to celebrate Mass in a small group gathered around the Lord's table and allows for the priests to use parts of the Mass for teaching purposes. Students are also encouraged to participate in the Mass as lectors, altar servers, musicians, and liturgical dancers.

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In 2013 a greater emphasis was placed on showcasing the lives of the Saints. Should a Feast day fall on a Mass day, a special reading about the life of that Saint is read. In turn the Clergy teaches the student body about the life of that Saint during the homily.

One program that stands out is the St. George Buddy program. What makes the program unique to St. George is that new, Kindergarten students are buddied (paired) with older students. Buddies are kept paired together until the Kindergarten students receive their First Holy Eucharist. Older students serve as role models for younger students at weekly school mass and often join their buddies as they celebrate the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Eucharist with them. Many of these buddies remain friends throughout their time at St. George Catholic School. As older students leave St. George, their younger buddies send them off with cheers and well wishes.

Examples

- Service hours (Service in God's Name)
- Mass
- Reconciliation
- Retreats (NET team was added in 2013)
- Rosary (Visit from Holy Cross College Family Rosary Team in 2013)
- 5th Grade Living Rosary
- Living Stations
- Emphasis on the lives of the Saints
- Religion Fair
- Cantors
- Bells
- Buddies
- Liturgical Ministers (lectors, altar servers, musicians, dancers)
- 3rd Grade Litany of Saints
- 4th Grade Religion Fair
- 7th Grade St. Joseph's Altar (added in 2015)
- Service Projects

Direction

Moving forward St. George will define strategies that help increase student and family attendance in Sunday Mass and increase student and family participation in Mass. Greater emphasis will be placed upon information and education regarding Catholic traditions such as the Rosary, St. Joseph's Altar, Adoration, etc.