

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we gather as a parish community at the 9:30 am Mass to celebrate Catholic Schools Week. This is an annual event nationwide which highlights the mission and dynamism of Catholic education in the United States. In this past week's Catholic San Francisco, columnist Lidia Wasowicz wrote in her article "School-parish partnerships promote faith, friendship, fun" that "The school and parish that work, play and pray together stay strong, supportive, and spiritual together." She highlighted parishes and schools who are actively engaged in such an essential and mutually dependent community.

Barbara Beaulieu of St. Raphael's Parish in San Rafael commented: "The children are our future parishioners, and it is very important for them to feel they are...a part of a bigger community who cares for them as they are educated by God-loving staff and teachers." I would add that being a strong community of faith requires the active desire and participation of parishioners, students, parents alike. We are privileged here at St. Pius to have a strong connection between parish and school, but we are striving to make those bonds ever stronger. I am grateful for the presence of Father Kyle and Father Edgardo in the classroom on a regular basis; I am teaching the Confirmation Class to our school eighth graders and I encourage all of our priests to be visibly present on the school campus and at school-sponsored events.

One of the goals I promulgated when appointed pastor was to see greater interaction between school and parish families. I am grateful for the monthly luncheons between our students and Adele Sanchez and our Seniors group; there are more and more parents and students joining our 9:30 Family Mass choir under the direction of Tony Eiras, our Director of Sacred Music. Our Parish Council, under the leadership of Stephanie Herbst (Chair) and David Tomatis (Co-Chair) and the Finance Council led by Donna Schreiber (Chair) are looking for strategies to bring our community closer together for the celebration of Mass and social activities. In March, the Parish Council will be holding a one-day retreat to reflect upon and strategize our goals and vision for the next few years. Participants in this retreat will include parish staff as well as school principal Mr. Marc Nava and vice principal Catie Costa.

I want to publicly acknowledge Mr. Nava and Ms. Costa as well as Operations Manager Judy Giacometti and Bookkeeper Debbie Castelli. Together, they have forged a very strong working relationship which supports the premise that the parish and school are united in one common mission to support the entire parish family of St. Pius. One of the primary reasons Mr. Nava was selected as principal was his evident passion for our Catholic faith and how it is practiced and enhanced in a school setting; he also saw quite naturally the symmetry between our respective ministries of pastor and principal working collaboratively and positively to build upon the dedication and work of previous pastors, Fathers Jim MacDonald and Paul Rossi and past principal, Ms. Rita Carroll.

Today's Gospel of Matthew is fitting in light of Catholic Schools Week. Jesus called Peter, Andrew and others to leave their routine and come and follow him, and this is our call as well. We are invited to be companions with Jesus in the mission of the Church, that is, to proclaim the Good News of God's redemptive love, to work for healing the sick and broken-hearted, to use our God-given talents in the service of others.

Fr. Tom