



# Msgr. Marren's Desk

## Catholic Education and Schools

### Why Catholic Schools?

Traveling this past summer with Fr. Anthony Eshun from Ghana, he would frequently comment on how good the roads were here in America. "Good road, nice and smooth, no pot holes," he would say. We can understand Fr. Anthony's comments given that only the major roads are paved in Ghana with most of them being made of gravel or dirt. They are frequently washed out during the rainy season and in the dry season, they smother you in dust. Enough said about good roads; now let's discuss good schools. What makes for a good school? In order to answer that question, we ask "What is the purpose of education?" But then to answer that question, we must go one step further and ask the most important question of all, namely "What is the purpose and meaning of my life?"

Only a school system which addresses, answers and prepares us to fulfill the purpose and meaning of life can be considered a good school. Of course not all agree on the purpose and meaning of life. As Catholics, we believe that we are born to know, love, and serve God in this world

in order to be happy with Him forever in the next. Saint Paul tells us, "As you well know, we have our citizenship in heaven and from it we await our savior the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil 3:20). We either believe this or we don't. If we believe this, then our catholic schools must help in achieving this goal. Yes, like this summer with Fr. Anthony, we are on a journey... the journey of life. We should try to choose the best road possible and drive according to the rules of the road which prevent us from crashing. We do not make up our own rules or values along the way nor is it wise to pick and choose only those we like. The existence of God is the most important truth of our lives for from this truth all other knowledge is built. The responsibility of the school working with parents is to enable the student to see this truth and all other truths which flow from it; truths about ourselves, our world and those who share this world with us.

By its very nature, God and His divine plan for us is an essential part of our education and cannot be something set apart. In this environment, the students learn to become aware of self-destructive philosophies of life such as hedonism, rela-

tivism, and individualism. Students learn that there is both good and evil in our world. There is right and wrong and conflicts arise when living out our catholic faith. They need to choose to do what is right rather than what's popular. We need our students to know that its perfectly ok to refuse to go along to get along. We need them to know that respecting others does not mean they relinquish their own firm grasp on what's right and true.

In the end, it must be stated clearly that our godless public school system in America today falls very much short of what a good education system entails. But also the question must be asked, "Why do parents choose catholic schools for their children?" I would hope that it be to help them to know, love, and serve God here on earth so that they will be happy with Him finally in heaven. However from experience, I know that this is not always the case. Some choose catholic schools in order to shield their children from "alien" influences, as if catholic schools were some sort of protective island. There are many good reasons for a catholic school but isolation isn't one of them. The only true reason is to know, love, and serve.

"The process of secularization tends to reduce the faith and the Church to the sphere of the private and personal. Furthermore, by completely rejecting the transcendent, it has produced a growing deterioration of ethics, a weakening of the sense of personal and collective sin, and a steady increase in relativism. These have led to a general sense of disorientation, especially in the periods of adolescence and young adulthood which are so vulnerable to change. ...We are living in an information-driven society which bombards us indiscriminately with data—all treated as being of equal importance—and which leads to remarkable superficiality in the area of moral discernment. In response, we need to provide an education which teaches critical thinking and encourages the development of mature moral values."

- Pope Francis

\* More information to follow on this topic next week.