



## Capitol Comments:

### Catholic School Formation - An Invaluable Opportunity

By Andrew Rivas, Executive Director, Texas Catholic Conference

Our eldest child is a senior in high school and our second eldest is in the eighth grade. Both girls go to Catholic schools and both are getting ready to graduate. We know that their experiences in Catholic schools will help them to be strong *and faithful* in whatever their future holds.

I am a product of Catholic grade schools and always wanted to give my kids the same opportunity my parents gave me. My wife went to public schools all her life and when difficult times came her way, she was not afforded the opportunity to work through problems in the school setting through the eyes of faith. A Catholic school would have been able to give her that support, and so she was determined to place our children in Catholic schools.

In the last twelve years we've been through some lean times where we've had to make sacrifices to keep our kids in Catholic schools. Tuition, uniforms and various school fees can seem even bigger when your roof needs to be repaired or when your minivan needs brakes. There have even been times when we didn't think highly of a particular teacher but we were dedicated to the principle that our children's education had to include their spiritual formation as well.

I don't mean to imply that our children are somehow holier than those who attend public schools. Trust me - the words "holy" and "my children" do not always belong together, and I have the gray hair to prove it. Nor do I mean to suggest that public schools kids all turn out to be atheists, my wife is one of the most faithful Catholics I know and she only went to public schools. No, the reason why I am so grateful our kids have gone to parochial schools is because their education has been interwoven with math, English, history, prayer and the moral values of our community and Church. In their minds all those things go together naturally and that is a good thing.

More importantly, their formation while attending Catholic schools has been a continuing formation for my wife and me. Oh there was a time when I thought my faith formation was complete, hey I was an altar boy and I know the Nicene Creed, but when my daughter came home and asked me who was the patron saint of music, I was stumped. It's St Cecilia, by the way. That was an easy one; I was also stumped by "why does God allow so much suffering in the world?" "Do snakes go to heaven?" "Can we pray to grandpa?" If you know the answers to those questions without having to talk to a priest, a nun, or your spouse then you have my sincerest admiration.

As we prepare for two graduations in our house I want to thank the Sisters, priests and laypeople who work to educate and help form children in our Catholic faith. The role you play in teaching your students to think of God in their studies and in their lives is invaluable to their lifelong formation as Catholics. God bless you in teaching, educating, and living your faith to your students.