

## A LETTER FROM ANNE WILLKENS LEACH

### DEAR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS,

The Christmas season of 2012 has brought needed peace as we reflect on the joy of the birth of Jesus. We also have prayed for those who need our thoughts and prayers at this time as so many need the gift of healing.

As we celebrate the beginning of Catholic Schools Week Jan. 27, and look forward to the Spring, I am mindful of how much has been accomplished at our schools during our first semester. We have continued to work on the Common Core standards and, at the same time, focusing on the power of prayer and the gift of faith.

We are blessed with teachers, administrators and staff who care deeply about each of our children. They give above and beyond each and everyday. They can be counted on to always enlighten our children with knowledge and faith.

It has been said that the best form of marketing is "word of mouth". To that end, I am counting on you, as parents and guardians, for help in increasing our enrollment. Please make a point of placing the bumper stickers, which were sent home by your principal, in the windows of your car.

We want to see our stickers throughout the Diocese of Rochester. Also, please speak with friends, neighbors and relatives about the value of a Catholic education. It is by praising the value of our schools that we will get more children in "the seats". It is our mission and duty to share with everyone what a solid, worthwhile, lifelong learning experience Catholic education is.

The education provided in a Catholic school in the Diocese of Rochester is extraordinary.

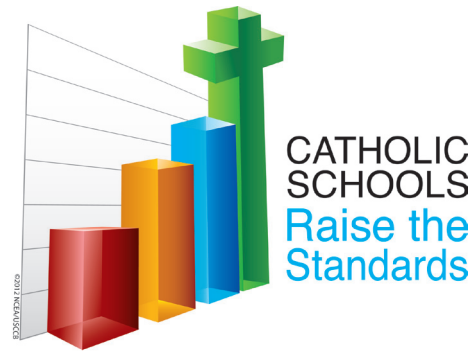
I ask your help in supporting Catholic education in our diocese. We need each other to bring new students in and to keep the students we have with us.

Thank you for all you do in providing your child with the finest education coupled with academic excellence, values and faith.

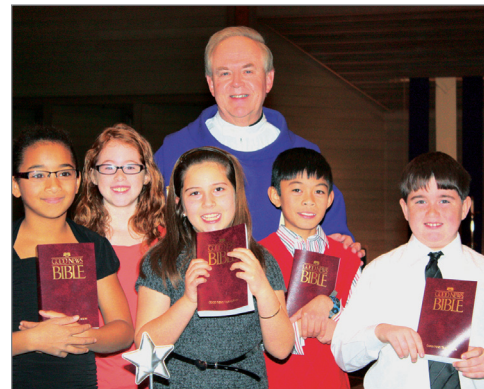
I thank you, our parents and guardians, for your generous support of Catholic education which showcases your deep love of your children.

Together we will ensure that each of our children grow with God into a loving, knowledgeable, caring adult.

God love you,  
Anne Willkens Leach  
Superintendent of Schools



*Celebrate*  
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK  
JANUARY 27 - FEBRUARY 2



### Bibles presented to students ST. MARY OUR MOTHER SCHOOL, HORSEHEADS

Each year 4th Grade students at Saint Mary Our Mother School, Horseheads, receive their own Bible. The Bibles are presented to the students in honor of, or in memory of someone, usually someone with specific ties to one of the students. This year the students received their Bibles at the First Friday Mass their class led - Friday, Dec.7. Blessing and presenting the Bibles was Father Christopher Linsler, pastor of Saint Mary Our Mother Church.

### INSIDE:

- ▶ School Celebrations
- ▶ Bible Presentation
- ▶ Letter to Parents

Diocese of Rochester Catholic Schools

January 2013

# Partners

NEWSLETTER

## ALUMS CREDIT CATHOLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION WITH INSTILLING CHARACTER, VALUES, KNOW-HOW

By MARK HARE



"It made me the person I am today," Pamela Negley says of her student days at St. Mary School in Canandaigua. "Two of my best girlfriends, I've known since grade school," Negley (Class of '79) says. "I loved doing the sacraments with my classmates and I loved the bonds we had with our teachers."

Today, Pam Negley is the school secretary at St. Mary, a job that has only deepened her appreciation for the value of a Catholic school education. From her position she interacts with generous donors who "know it's important and they are willing to help others in need" — whether that means writing a check or bringing in bags of school supplies for children whose families are struggling to make ends meet.

Like Negley, many alumni are grateful for the intangibles they took from their Catholic school education — the sense of family and community, self-discipline, love of the faith, and a moral compass that still guides them in making tough decisions.



"There was a big emphasis on discipline, morality and service to others," says Richard Alexander, a 1972 graduate of St. Lawrence School in Greece. "I participated in the first Earth Day (in 1970)," he says, and I still remember walking along a creek picking up trash."

### MASTERING THE FUNDAMENTALS

Alexander, whose three brothers also attended St. Lawrence, continued his Catholic education at the former Cardinal Mooney High School and St. John Fisher College. He is a lawyer with the Rochester firm of Harter Secrest & Emery LLP.

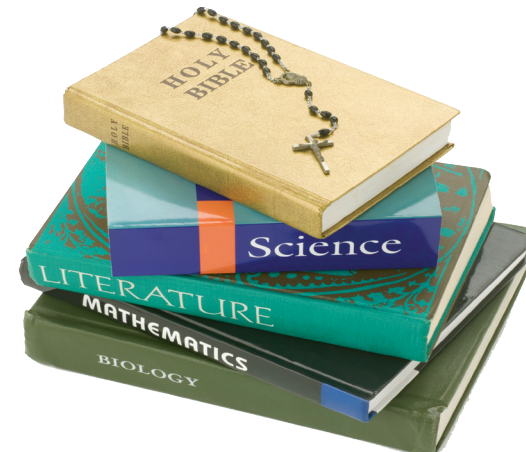
At St. Lawrence, he says, the teachers emphasized mastering all the fundamentals of a good education, but the most important thing he learned, Alexander says, is "when in doubt, always do the right thing."



Richard Alexander's brother Paul Alexander (St. Lawrence '74), for the past 18 seasons the offensive line coach for the National Football League Cincinnati Bengals, says "I knew at St. Lawrence that I wanted to be a coach," and he was encouraged by a teacher there to pursue his dream.

He says he will never forget the academic and spiritual head start he got at St. Lawrence and Cardinal Mooney. "I was an above average student," Paul Alexander says, but "when I got to college I felt I was well ahead." He still appreciates the academic grounding in his Catholic faith. The daily immersion, he says, "has helped me live my faith."

In his coaching, Alexander says, he doesn't push his personal religious beliefs, but he says, "hopefully the way you live and the way you treat people" reflects the Catholic values he was taught. Certainly, the discipline he learned has served him well, and not just on the field. Four



years ago, Alexander began to take piano lessons from his daughter's teacher, concert pianist Albert Muhlbock. He sees music as another way to strive for excellence, using the sense of commitment and discipline he acquired at St. Lawrence.

### "WHERE WE BELONGED"



Terry Clifford says the friendships she made in elementary school have endured and deepened over 40 years. Clifford, popular co-host of "The Bee Morning Coffee Club" on 92.5 WBEE-FM in Rochester, graduated from 8th grade at the former St. Alphonsus School in Auburn (now called St. Joseph's School) in 1972.

As they entered a freshman class of 658 at Auburn High School that fall, the 72 St. Alphonsus grads were "like fish out of water,"

*Continued on page 2*



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she says. "But our friendships really sustained us and helped us find out where we belonged."

Her parents sent three children to St. Alphonsus, Clifford says, and regularly volunteered at the school.

"I found myself later doing the same thing when our kids were in school," she says, "And it wasn't a big deal. It's just what we do." It was all part of learning to live the faith — the central reason for a Catholic education. Giving freely is part of that, Clifford says, but so too, is looking deep into Catholic practices and teachings. "I know what the different colors for vestments mean," she says. "I know people my age who, when I say Nov. 1 is a Holy Day, they ask, 'How do you know that?'"

Because of her education at Penfield's St. Joseph School, **Marcia Glenn** (Class of '67), says she grew into adulthood "with a far greater sense of conscience and the knowledge of how to relate to and treat people." Glenn, one of eight siblings who attended Catholic school, is an associate broker for Nothnagle Realtors and the company's top-selling agent.

"My family always had a firm belief in religion," Glenn says, and school "reinforced what we heard at home. We learned how to approach life, and how to do whatever is in your power to succeed."

**FOREVER GRATEFUL**

"There was a great sense of community," says **Dan Mason**, general manager of the International League Rochester Red Wings and an alum of Holy Trinity School in Webster (Class of '81), McQuaid Jesuit High School ('85) and Notre Dame University ('89). His Catholic school days taught him compassion, respect and commitment. Dan was one of six siblings who attended Catholic school.

When Mason was in elementary school, the family lived one year in California, but an older brother remained in Webster. "He was killed in a farm accident," Mason says, "and I will never forget the outpouring of support from Holy Trinity families. They met us at the airport when we came home for the funeral and gave us rides. All the kids in my grade and in my sister's grade came to the funeral. When you're young it's hard to grasp the concept of loving somebody, but they had it and I am forever



Holy Cross, Charlotte



St. Kateri, Irondequoit



St. Rita, Webster

grateful for that sense of community."



The personal relationships he enjoyed at St. Rita School in Webster helped him appreciate both the importance of hard work and deep faith, says **Keith Smith** (St. Rita '94).

Fr. John Reif, then the pastor, and Sr. Katherine Ann Rappl RSM, then and still the principal, regularly wrote personal notes with report cards to encourage students, Smith says. "You just didn't want to let them down."

After his graduation from the University of Buffalo with a degree in international studies and political science, Smith landed an internship and then a staff job with former U.S. Sen.

# School Celebrations



St. Joseph, Penfield



St. Lawrence, Greece



Holy Family, Elmira



St. Joseph, Penfield



St. John Neumann, Rochester



St. Pius X, Chili

George Allen of Virginia. He lives today in suburban Washington, D.C., and is the advisor to the president of the National Association of Manufacturers, one of the country's largest trade associations.

"Sister Katherine Ann always says everyone has to recognize their strengths," Smith says. "Are you an afternoon studier or do you do better in the evening or waking up early in the morning? Find your strength — I always think back to that," he says.

There is another lesson Catholic school alums almost always cite — the importance of sacrifice. It's always a struggle to send children to Catholic school, but parents and teachers gladly make it, for the sake of the children.

"My parents never made a big issue of the sacrifice," says Michael Snyder, a 1988 graduate

of Elmira's Holy Family School. "But they always made it clear that it was an important thing. So we had that awareness, too." Snyder, a lawyer who clerks for the 3rd Department, Appellate Division of New York State Supreme Court, says his parents' deep faith was obvious. "You knew this is why we go to church; this is why we go to school."

**WORTH THE SACRIFICE**

It has always been a struggle, says Katherine Ann Rappl, now in her 30th year as principal at St. Rita. "I remember that it was always hard for my mother to come up with a quarter for my brother way back when he was in Catholic school."

One of the office aides at St. Rita has put four children through Catholic school, Sr. Rappl

says, "and now that they're all through, she and her husband just bought their first new car."

Catholic school teachers and administrators accept lower compensation and often live very simply because they know that a faith-based education is more valuable than anything they could ever buy, says Sr. Edwardine Weaver RSM, a former superintendent of Catholic schools for the Diocese of Rochester. And the schools, she says, are essential to the future of the church. Clergy and lay leaders are typically graduates of Catholic schools.

And, by the way, Weaver says, Catholic schools are pretty good academically, too. "Nationally, Catholic secondary schools have a 99 percent graduation rate, with 85 percent going on to college" she says.

"It's a ministry," says Ann Marie Deutsch,

principal of St. Mary School in Canandaigua. People choose Catholic education, she says, "to have children in school where the faith values are consistent with those at home. It's a sacrifice for everybody, for the teachers, too. They have Masters degrees and certification, but this is their ministry, Deutsch says.

The sacrifice is a manifestation of the faith values parents want to share with their children. "I equate it to learning a language," Sr. Rappl says. "I took Spanish in high school for four years, but I can't speak it. But if you went to Spain, you'd learn it. It's the same with the faith. In Catholic school, you are immersed in it, and you get it."

*Mark Hare, a retired Democrat and Chronicle columnist, is a Rochester-based freelance writer.*