

Why I Am Catholic

Catholic schools.

I attended Catholic schools from seventh grade thru high school graduation. I believe those years of Catholic education continue to have a positive impact on my life, my faith, my moral conduct, and the way I see the world. Catholic schools provide spiritual and moral lessons that one rarely receives in public schools and a healthier learning environment

In Catholic schools, one's awareness of Christ is stronger. Christ is present in my teachers, other students, and in me. Christ is the foundation of the school and all knowledge and faith flow from Him. Christ inspires a Catholic school to be created, makes the building of a school possible, and sustains and nurtures it.

When I transferred to Catholic schools, it was a critical time in my life. I attended a new public junior high school for two months and was struggling and being picked on. I was a sensitive, confused kid who needed a more loving, more disciplined, and more supportive environment. Transferring to a Catholic school did not solve all my problems, but I was able to overcome them with God's grace, the people he surrounded me with, and a belief in me—shown by my family and now others—that eventually I came to have as well. Catholic schools also prepared me academically for the challenges of college and the business world, and the intellectual demands of priesthood.

The difference of a Catholic school is both tangible and intangible. It includes the curricula, the learning environment, the faith dimension, and the kindness and concern of clergy, nuns, lay teachers and administrators, and the students who choose to imitate Christ.

In mid-January, when I visited my Catholic grammar school and high school, I was reminded of the impact those places continue to have on my life. And of the people and experiences that were hugely important at those times of my life.

Catholic schools started in the United States at a time when Catholics were either not allowed into public schools or were persecuted for their faith. Today more than 2.3 million students attend Catholic primary and secondary schools. They "represent 28.0% of all private schools and enroll 47.1% of all private school students." (*National Catholic Educational Association, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops*)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that: "As those first responsible for the education of their children, parents have the right to *choose a school for them* which corresponds to their own convictions. This right is fundamental. As far as possible parents have the duty of choosing schools that will best help them in their task as Christian educators. (2229)