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## How Cool is *That*?

MARY J. FOLEY

“How cool is that?” This sentiment, pondered by a typical student today might refer to anything from the latest iPad version to the next generation cell phone/camera contraption. But my very fond memories of my own Catholic school experience recall this phrase in thinking about...God. Specifically, how much and the way in which He loves us.

While the benefits of Catholic education are well-known and highly documented, I fear the outstanding academic results may sometimes overshadow the unique and vital dimension of this understanding. *God loves us*. So simple, yet when reinforced daily at school and at home, amazingly powerful.

We often hear that Catholic schools instill the faith and this is essential to the future of our Church. Catholic school kids grow up and are more likely to attend Mass and take on volunteer and leadership roles in their parishes. But on a purely individual level, enabling youngsters to recognize, realize and engage in a personal relationship with God offers benefits beyond calculation or comprehension.

Growing up, my family would likely be categorized as “good Catholics” meaning that we went to Church each Sunday, occasionally during the week, more often in Lent. Yet, ours was not a family inclined to talk about faith, God, spirituality.

So my grounding in God’s love really came through the teachers and staff of my Catholic elementary and secondary schools. It was there that I learned that God knew me – personally! And loved me in such a way that I was convinced, from a very early age, that even if my friends betrayed me and family abandoned me, I would never feel alone.

Ever.

To say that this is comforting is an understatement. This belief, ingrained so young, provides the children in our Catholic schools with enormous strength, power, confidence. Knowing this, feeling this *every* day, what couldn't be attempted, accomplished, achieved?

This element – certainly a “best practice” of our Catholic schools – coupled with scholastic excellence, personal attention and religious formation, makes for an exemplary experience that offers benefits to the children themselves, their families and the society in which they will dwell as workers, parents, community members and church goers.

Catholic schools give each child this perpetual gift, and the parents who choose Catholic education receive greater and greater payback for their investment with each passing year.

Our Catholicity is more than just a demographic descriptor. It is, or can be, the ruling force in our lives, governing choices, decisions and the very manner in which we conduct ourselves. Our commitments to family, friends, neighbors, parish and the common good reflect our understanding of not only who we are, but *whose* we are.

We are God's beloved, something to remember always.

How cool is *that*?

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