

## CELEBRATING AN ENDURING LEGACY

When we come to the end of a significant life event, especially if that ending is an unhappy one, we often focus only on the sadness of the moment, and that's understandable. But if we take time to look beyond the present moment of loss or sadness we can, hopefully, remember the good times and appreciate the enduring blessings that can never be lost.

I hope that's the way we can approach and celebrate this challenging moment in the history of our parish with the closing of St. Joseph School. Anyone who looked honestly at the demographic and financial realities playing out over the past decade could hardly have been surprised at this outcome, but that doesn't make the reality any easier to accept. What can make this easier is to recognize and remember what Mr. Fleming described last week as the "colorful history" of the school—though I'm not sure that "colorful" would be the word to describe the spitballs on the classroom ceilings; "colorful", however, might describe the teachers' reactions to them!

Yes, there will be many memories to share and to treasure. But even more important than memories is the enduring legacy of more than nine decades of Catholic education. That legacy endures in the lives of the students who passed through those doors, sat at those desks, played in the gym, and established friendships that in many cases last a lifetime. But most of all, the legacy of St. Joseph School endures in the faith that was taught and nurtured, first by the Dominican Sisters and then by teams of dedicated lay-teachers. It's so important to remember that passing on the faith is the reason a parish exists, and that mission was accomplished beautifully through St. Joseph School.

What we have to realize now is that the mission of nurturing faith and passing on the faith to the young people of our community will continue through a strong Religious Education program. And as I observed a few weeks ago, that mission will hopefully be enhanced by a revived Youth Ministry program as well as continuing Adult Formation. I remember a pastor I knew years ago opining that the Catholic Church does things backwards in some ways: "we teach children and play with adults" he said, when it should be the other way around. Yes, we must teach the faith to our children, but we should never stop learning more about our faith and sharing it with one another throughout our lives. To that end, we're beginning the process of creating accessible meeting space in two school classrooms where adult formation will be ongoing.

This weekend, we celebrate the legacy of St. Joseph School, a legacy that will live on in the lives of those who have walked those hallways in the past. But we also celebrate the mission of passing on and sharing the faith—a mission that will continue in those classrooms and hallways for many, many years to come.

Fr. Bob

