

WINTER PICNIC SPRING REWARDS

As plans for this past January's Winter Picnic moved along and it became clear that our school would most likely be closing at the conclusion of this school year, the picnic committee members had to reconsider the goal for this great parish fundraiser.

For its first two years, the Winter Picnic focused on the support of "Catholic education", namely our own Catholic school, and that focus generated impressive support from alumni and parishioners alike. But with the imminent closing of the school, I suggested to the committee that we still needed to support "Catholic education" in our own Religious Education program (CCD) and through our support of young men and women who wanted to continue their religious formation in a Catholic high school. So the committee agreed that, in addition to helping fund our CCD program, a total of \$5,000 of the Picnic proceeds would be given to one CCD and one St. Joseph School eighth grader in the form of two \$2,500, one-year scholarships to the Catholic high school of their choice.

I created an application process that included a transcript of the student's latest grades, letters from parents and another adult (teacher, coach, etc.) and, most importantly, an essay from the student applicant on why their faith is important to them. Two members of the Winter Picnic committee would then review these submissions with me and, if necessary, interview the students to determine the scholarship recipients. As it turned out, only three students applied for the scholarships, and all three seemed to us to be worthy of assistance. So at my suggestion, it was decided that we would add another \$1,000 to the total and award \$2,000 scholarships to each of the three applicants.

The graduates who will be receiving these awards are **Lauren Rose** and **Taylor Roquemore** from our school who will both be attending Marian Catholic and **Gino Gazzillo** from our CCD program who will be attending Mt. Carmel next year. Here are some brief excerpts from the letters written by these three: "My practice of faith is important to me...because it gives me encouragement and teaches me to be kind and compassionate to others"; "This year in class...I learned about the importance of embracing God's love; we need to know that God is with us at all times to help us with our decisions"; "My faith means a lot to me...I know that God will always be there for me. When I pray at Mass, I feel so comfortable talking to God." And there were many more very impressive reflections from Lauren, Taylor and Gino.

I hope you'll agree that these young people deserve our support as they continue their education in a Catholic school environment. Our annual Winter Picnic will continue to provide these scholarships in the future as we strive to offer the support our young people need – here in our own parish and in the Catholic high schools of their choice.

Fr. Bob