

Catholic Identity

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The History of the Community of Our Lady of Victories Parish is rich with dedication and devotion to maintaining a Catholic Elementary School. Within months after the final Dedication of the new parish in 1889 four classrooms were opened in the basement of the church. They were staffed by the Franciscan Sisters from Philadelphia who served the parish school until 1895. In that year the parish school formed a relationship with the children, families and community with and within the beautiful traditions and the examples of Mother Catherine McAuley – The tradition of Christian service wherever there is a social need. That relationship and that example continues to this day as our school is still blessed with a Sister of Mercy who shepherds our First Holy Communion Class in their initial encounter with the very real existence of Christ in the Eucharist.

CATHOLIC IDENTITY IN TODAY'S WORLD

Catholic identity is maintained, as only it can be, by the examples, lifestyle and awareness of our Faculty, Clergy, Parish family, Parish Staff and parents. In this respect Our Lady of Victories is particularly fortunate. Our school faculty members are all practicing and spiritually educated Catholics. (Most are members of the parish). They teach not only with their words but with their compassion and love of the children in their charge. Faculty meetings not only serve to benefit administrative and classroom needs but also become an opportunity to share a perceived need to reach out in particular fashion to a specific need of a student or a family.

The core of our school parents are dedicated, enthusiastic and hard working supporters of Catholic Education and a Christian lifestyle who serve as inspiration not only to the children but also to the Teachers and staff of the school. Our priests make it a point to be visible and available to our school children. They interact with the boys and girls who participate as altar servers; they provide for special liturgies throughout the school year as well as penance services.

The philosophy and commitment to Catholic identity is enforced by daily community prayer at the beginning and end of each school day. Each classroom maintains a prayer table with bible, cross, candle and a spot for intentions. Students attend at least one weekday mass each week. Children learn the good feeling that comes with reaching out others by participating in charitable events, fund raisers for food banks, shelters and nursing homes. The children visit nursing homes, and share their musical and other talents with shut-ins, and the elderly. The students participate in collections of materials and items of clothing for our servicemen and unwed mothers.

Catholic identity is kept as a focus of the school's daily life in its stated Philosophy:
"Catholic education makes our faith come alive through instruction in the unique setting of a school whose model teacher is Jesus Christ. The educational program of Our Lady of Victories School provides for the development of the spiritual, intellectual, psychosocial, physical and emotional growth of the students through the dedicated commitment of the administration, faculty, staff and clergy with the cooperation of the parents."

As important as learning to imitate Christ by their own, hands-on acts of charity, the students at Our Lady of Victories are also emerged in the teachings and the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church in their classrooms. With age appropriate instructions the children come to understand the significance and appreciate the beauty of the liturgical seasons. Advent wreaths, palm and other symbols of the seasons are in school and taken home. Lenten observations and the Stations of the Cross are suitably introduced in every grade level. The older students each year present a version of the Living Stations of the Cross for the younger children and parish community.

The faculty continues to enforce their own dedication to Catholic Identity by their continuing Catholic education and their involvement in various, out-of-school, Parish, and Diocesan programs and functions.

The Catholic Identity of the school is expressed to the community in significant fashion in the published reports of the students' fund-raising and charitable activities. The school also has an opening Mass each year where the talents of the students in their musical ministry are showcased.

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Areas of Concern

The concern seen by the Council is maintaining a strong Catholic identity. This is viewed as a challenge due to the increase in number of non-Catholics moving into the area we service.

GOAL

- The Our Lady of Victories School Community will work to maintain higher visibility as a preferred Catholic educational institution.

OBJECTIVES

As a means to obtain the Goal of higher visibility as an Identifiable Catholic educational institution:

1. We will make greater use of the local press and diocesan press in publishing the charitable activities and involvements of our students and faculty.
2. We will reach out to new families joining the parish, moving into the area or who have had children recently receive their sacraments with information about our Catholic school.

3. We will expand the number of outside charitable functions in which the students and their families can participate.

ACTION STEPS

The action steps we will take to implement our Goal and Objectives are:

1. We will form a committee who will handle and write press releases and contact all local newspapers, cable stations, community bulletin boards and diocesan newspaper. Development/Marketing Committee has already begun this process.
2. We will design a brochure to deliver to all local real estate agents especially those agents who are members of the parish or who advertise in the parish bulletin. To be finalized by January, 2010.
3. We will work with the parish St. Vincent DePaul program and the parish Pro-Life Committee to get more opportunities for the students to get involved in.
4. Our Lady of Victories School will continue to strengthen it's role as a parish ministry for the good of the parish as well as the school.