

# Catholic Schools Week 2008 – SACRED HEART

## LESSON: Jesus Doesn't Work Alone

The arrest of St John the Baptist, mentioned at the beginning of this Gospel passage, was a **moment of transition** for Jesus.



- ? Before that point, Jesus had **begun** gathering his Apostles and preaching, but only on a **part-time** basis.
- ? As long as John the Baptist continued preaching and baptizing, Jesus stayed **in the wings**.
- ? But when John was arrested, that was the **sign**.
- ? The last prophet had been **silenced**, and the moment had come for Jesus, the **Messiah** whom all the prophets had announced, to **take center stage**.

St Matthew tells us that when that moment came, Jesus moved to **Capernaum** and **called** his first Apostles.

- ? Peter, Andrew, James, and John had all met Jesus **before**, when they were still disciples of John the Baptist.
- ? They had **spent time** with Jesus.
- ? They had seen him perform the **miracle at Cana**, turning water into wine at the wedding feast.
- ? They had started to **get to know him** - the Gospel of John tells us that they had even come to **believe** that he was the Messiah.



But that's not **enough** for Jesus. Jesus has more to **show** them, and more for them **to do**.

- ? So at this crucial moment, when he is ready to begin his full-time ministry, Jesus goes out to these fishermen as they ply their trade on the Sea of Galilee, calls them by name, and invites them to help **build his Kingdom**.
- ? Jesus didn't start his mission **alone**, and he doesn't **continue** it alone.

He established his Church and began his work of salvation with the **help** of these chosen apostles, and today he continues his work **in the same way**, calling normal fishermen, folks like you and me, to become his **apostles**.

Christ's message is one of Hope, Joy, Forgiveness, Mercy, Peace and Love. It is a message which so needed to be heard in Jesus' day. And it is a message that **still** needs **desperately** to be heard today.

## ILLUSTRATION: "Catholic Schools Light the Way"

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone." (Isaiah 9:1) **That light is Christ's healing and saving message of Salvation!**

Could you imagine living in the dark? Could you imagine living in those places in the world (like Alaska or Scandinavia) where there are days when the sun **never shines**? So many people suffer from winter depression because of a lack of sunlight – could you imagine living **without** the sun?

Unfortunately, we don't have to imagine – we **do** live without the sun – **without the Son of God**. Our world is wandering around like the "people who walk in darkness." We have **totally** lost our



way in this life – **not to mention** our way to **eternal life**! War and hatred, prejudice and a lack of trust, envy and greed: these are the elements of darkness which have invaded our lives and our world. We have truly lost our way – the way the Christ showed us when He called His apostles to follow Him – but there **is** a way back – and it is our Catholic Parishes & Schools which "light the way."

One of the **many things** that our Catholic Schools do extremely well is educate the **whole child, in mind, body AND spirit**.

- ✍ Catholic Schools address the spiritual needs of children
- ✍ Catholic Schools help children to know and believe that they are unique creations of God
- ✍ Catholic Schools help children to discover the light of Christ living within them
- ✍ Secure of this knowledge, graduates of Catholic schools for generations have gone out into the world ready to make a difference – ready to share their light with a darkened world.

**SATURDAY:** Just look around us this afternoon. We have with us today members of the SHS classes of 1957 & 1958 who are celebrating together their 50<sup>th</sup> reunion.

**SUNDAY 7:30 & 11:** Last evening we had members of the SHS classes of 1957 & 1958 who were here to celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> reunion.

They [came] have come from far and wide and returned to this place, Sacred Heart School, which nurtured their lives of faith, which showed them the way in this world, in order to be with Christ forever in the next. We also [had] have with us [tonight] parents who worked so hard 50+ years ago to bring Catholic Education to the Juniata Valley. [Those] These parents saw that their children needed more than just a quality education – which our public schools provide so well. These parents recognized that their children needed a **superior Catholic education** where their children would learn not just math and science, but morals and character.

**SUNDAY 11:** Today we have with us out school students, parents and teachers.



I've told you many times that having a school in my first assignment as a pastor was not my plan – not to mention a school that was having serious financial problems. But Bishop Dattilo asked me to come. What I discovered was a gem – a gem that needed some polishing, but a gem none-the-less.

I think that our parish had fallen asleep, that our school was beginning to lose its focus as a light; and so that light was dimming. But, praise be to God, **all that has changed!** Our parish has **awakened** from her slumber and **become a light** to our community! Remember how we were not liked or understood; remember how people looked down on us as Catholics? **Times have changed!** People call me a “media hound,” but how else can we get Christ’s message of joy and hope out to the community and to the world – how can we shine Christ’s light – unless we engage the world and proclaim the **Truth** of our faith and the **Joy** which our faith brings us.

Now, our parish **THRIVES** and truly **SHINES** with **Christ’s light**. A few years ago we may have been hesitant to say we were Catholic, now I think we all say **proudly**, “I belong to Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church!” We’ve become a light in our community!

Our school has seen tough times. Pausing to reflect on the little bit of history that I understand, perhaps, for a short time, our parish failed to see our parish school as a means of bringing Christ’s light into our community. Perhaps, for a short time, our school failed to let its light shine out. It used to be “us” (the parish) vs. “them” (the school). But all that has changed! Now **WE**, as a parish & parish school, proudly bring Christ’s light into the world. God has sent us parents and others who saw the value and mission of Catholic Schools and who sacrificed time, talent and finances and who have worked to help SHS truly shine.



✂ Our Catholic School provides a **superior Catholic education** to all

who come, no matter their faith.

- ✍ It provides a superior education in human knowledge (math, English, social studies, etc), AND in DIVINE Knowledge (Scripture, morality, theology).
- ✍ Our Catholic school lights the way to a brighter future for individuals and for society because we educate children of all faith background and all cultures. We help to advance, not just our own Catholic family, but the **HUMAN** family.
- ✍ Our parish school lights the way for all those whom Jesus is calling to follow as His disciples (like in today's Gospel), because our schools help students, parents, faculty, board members and the entire parish to follow Jesus by putting their faith into action.
- ✍ SHS sends a high percentage of its students to college and are extremely successful in preventing dropouts. All our Catholic schools remain effective for minorities and disadvantaged youth as well.
- ✍ Prayer and mission are at the heart of Catholic schools. Community service is a priority. Nationally, 94% of Catholic schools have service programs and on average, students in Catholic schools perform 79 hours of community service every year.
- ✍ Catholic educators tend to enjoy high levels of job satisfaction. In a national survey, teachers were asked to respond to the question, "if you could go back to college and start all over again, would you become a teacher or not?" More than 77% of Catholic school teachers responded yes. Many of these teachers pointed to the opportunity to work in a faith community as very important to job satisfaction.
- ✍ Our parish school has a distinct climate: an atmosphere that encourages and supports the learning process among students of all types. This climate aids our school in:
  - providing a quality education for disadvantaged and at-risk students,
  - encouraging them to excel in academic pursuits and personal development.
  - Consistently, our Catholic school features
    - ✍ smaller enrollment;
    - ✍ highly structured academic programs,
    - ✍ a devoted and loyal faculty,
    - ✍ and the practice of regular religious experiences.
  - All Catholic schools attempt to promote complete intellectual, spiritual, athletic and social development of their students.
  - Catholic schools provide a setting where each child is valued.

Certainly I could continue extolling the blessings of Catholic schools, but it is enough to say that our Catholic Schools TRULY DO light the way.

### **APPLICATION: Passing the Torch**

As Christians, we are all called to **share** in Christ's mission. His message has continued to **spread** throughout history because **his followers**, normal men and women, like his first apostles, like us, have **found ways** to **communicate** it to the people around them, to the **society** in which they lived.



We have **received** the light of faith, the flame of Christ's saving truth and grace, and now it is **our turn** to **pass it on** to others – and we do that today through our parish and our school – both of which “light the way of Christ” in our community.

We lead **busy** lives with many responsibilities and activities, but this mission of spreading Christ's Kingdom is what gives **unity and purpose** to our lives and our mission.

- ? It is what makes us **joyful** instead of **stressed** out in the midst of **being busy**.
- ? At work or school, we can **communicate Christ's message** by our example of excellence, responsibility, and helpfulness.
- ? And the members of our parish and our school will **shine** with Christ's light, and those around us will want to know what's **different** about us - and then we can **pass on the flame** of faith to them.
- ? We can **engage our needy culture** “walking in darkness” – we do this by praying at abortion facilities, volunteering our time with organizations and with projects that are spreading Christ's truth and grace, and constantly coming up with new way.

God **gave** us our talents, personalities, and opportunities, and he is **hoping** we will **follow his example** and Bring Christ’s light into the world.

THANK YOU to those who do this in our parish. THANK YOU to those who do this in our school. THANK YOU to those who had the vision of bringing a superior Catholic education to our parish and community. THANK YOU to those who choose to send their children to Sacred Heart School today. THANK YOU for living your faith – for realizing that just as Christ called Andrew and James, Peter & John he calls **each of us** to “light the way” – to bring light to a people who live in darkness.

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## Welcome to . . . Sacred Heart School

### MISSION STATEMENT

Sacred Heart of Jesus School, in a friendly and nurturing environment of personal attention, teaches the love of God and the Catholic faith, while providing a superior academic, physical and moral education, that prepares its students to become loving and active members of their families, their church and their community.

Catholic Schools Week '08  
Catholic Schools Week runs from  
January 27th through February 2nd.

Check out our brochure . . .  
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