

**LONDON DISTRICT CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD**

**STEWARDS IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION AWARD**

**MAY 2, 2004**

**REMARKS BY JOHN J. CALLAGHAN**

**FATHER MOCKLER, MR. RAPAI, TRUSTEES, MRS. GICANTE, OFFICIALS,  
SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES, PARENTS AND SPIRIT AWARD WINNERS**

First and foremost, I extend my congratulations to the Spirit Award Winners.

As well, I would like to thank Dr. Gerry Killan, the Principal of King's University College for nominating me for this award and to express my appreciation to the Selection Committee for honouring me with this recognition. Thanks to Mrs. Gicante for her kind remarks.

I've been asked to focus my remarks today on the meaning of "**Catholic Education**" in my life and also share my observations concerning its importance in society and its importance to me. Organizing my thoughts in this regard has been an interesting exercise. I've reviewed a great deal of material that has helped me to more fully understand my position and to articulate my feelings.

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that my Catholic education, in conjunction with the example set by my parents and my early involvement with the Church, did much to influence the formation of the values that shape the person I am today.

I am the 6<sup>th</sup> of 7 children raised in a traditional Catholic family. My mother was a homemaker and my father a doctor, who cared greatly for his patients, who loved St. Joseph's Hospital and who held the Sisters of St. Joseph in the highest regard.

As a young child, I served for several years as an altar boy at St. Michael's – my first of many lay roles with the Church. During my teens, I was a member of the Columbian Squires – a youth organization under the Knights of Columbus. These early experiences were the prelude to ongoing service to the Church that has brought me much satisfaction and contributed to what I hope is consistent spiritual growth.

My experience with Catholic education can be divided into two categories - student and parent.

I was a student in the Catholic school system in the 1950's and 1960's and graduated from CCH in 1963, the year in which President Kennedy was assassinated. The Vietnam War was beginning. The Beatles were on the horizon.

CCH was the only Catholic high school in London.

The school was very successful – in music and the arts, in academics and in athletics. I then went on to King’s College to complete my university education.

As a parent, I had the privilege of observing our two sons as they attended St. Michael’s, St. Mary’s, (Geoff) CCH and then King’s University College.

My wife and I marvel at the education they received.

Our sons were supported, encouraged, reprimanded, made confident and self-assured by their educators.

They were exposed to many role models in various capacities – administrators, teachers, coaches and social workers.

I served on the School Council at CCH and in that function witnessed the administration and staff in another way as they all worked tirelessly for the benefit of the students.

The Director’s Annual Report encourages graduates to continue their life’s journey as compassionate human beings, as contributing members of society and as followers of Jesus Christ. If I exhibit these traits in my daily life, it is due, in large part, to the values instilled in me by my parents, by the Church and by my Catholic education.

The distinctive purpose of Catholic Education is to provide learning that links moral and spiritual development to the life experiences of the learner and to promote a way of life that is rooted in the Christian call to service.

#### **CATHOLIC EDUCATION PROMOTES:**

A view of life that is God centered

A view of community that is Church centre

A view of person that is Christ centred

- the gospel values of Christ are in our curriculum and in our school relationships
- Gospel values refer to the guiding principles of the way of living exemplified by Jesus Christ – values such as community, hope, faith, courage, character, honesty and love.

We have and display, in our schools and in our homes, religious symbols such as crucifixes to clarify to ourselves and to others our meaning to the community. We pray and participate in the sacramental-life of the Church, through retreats, morning prayer and Mass.

When I reviewed the expectation of Catholic School Graduates, it seemed to me that any graduate who lives his/her life according to the values and teachings of the Church and of the Catholic school system, will satisfy these objectives and live by these Principles. The world in which we live would be a very different place if this were not the case.

I would also like to touch briefly on the role and impact of God in my life, on the significance of prayer and on the examples set for us by the Sisters of St. Joseph.

God has given me a wonderful family.

Parents, brothers and sisters

My wife, Linda of 33 years who has provided and continues to provide love, support, direction, counsel, understanding.

And our two children – Patrick and Geoff, who are adopted.

Patrick was born in 1977 and then Geoff in 1979. Geoff came to us because “we were a Catholic Family”.

We thank God every day for them.

I've also experienced first-hand the importance of prayer.

In October 2002, I was diagnosed with cancer and underwent a very successful operation.

The number of prayers, which were said for me, reflects the community within our Church.

The power of prayer to me is remarkable, both individually and collectively. God is always with us and I certainly knew he was with me at that time in my life.

The Sisters of St. Joseph are a congregation of truly remarkable religious women. They are the founders of our school system and have also established hospitals, orphanages, and social services, initially without public funding but with the belief that the public would support their works. The Sisters trusted God, loved God and consequently did much work to develop our Society and to establish our institutions. And they continue to find new ways to serve the poor and the marginalized.

At this stage in my life, they are my role models. In my current work, in the ministry of Catholic health care, I have some responsibility to carry on their work and traditions and in many ways I believe that God guided me in this direction.

## **CONCLUSION**

This is me and my reflections. I return now to the Spirit Award Winners – we have a wonderful tradition in Catholic education. We are encouraged to commit to service, use our talents to serve the needs of others. Social concern is high in Catholic thought. I encourage you to change and improve the world – improve it and remain true to the Gospel Values of Jesus Christ.

In closing, I ask you to consider the words of your director, Mr. Joe Rapai, who challenges you to preserve the enduring gift of Catholic education and build on its success with hopeful optimism.

Thank you.