

A speech from Steve Fitzpatrick, a parishioner of OLHC...

Good evening and thank you for having me here tonight. Father has asked me to speak to you as a lifelong parishioner who attended this school and sent my own three children here. I have experienced firsthand the values and benefits of an OLHC Catholic Education.

Several years back when my wife and I came to our first back to school night right down here, my wife, not being Catholic and having gone through public schools in the Centennial School district didn't quite understand all that a Catholic Grade School education meant. As each of the teachers were being introduced, 1st grade, 2nd grade 3rd and so forth she leaned over and asked me "where are the others?" I replied just wait there are 8 grades and 8 teachers. "But what about the other classes, she asked? She could not comprehend a small school that only had 1 class of each grade after attending large schools with 3 and 4 classes of each grade. It was her first introduction to a small Catholic school education.

It wasn't long after that night that my wife learned a second lesson about Catholic education. We were having a discussion with friends about the cost of the tuition here compared to some area private schools. She wondered aloud how our school could offer such quality education for so much less than the area private schools. I explained to her about the entire parish supporting the school. I told her that a portion of each collection went to help fund the school, that in order to provide the quality education and Catholic values that we cherish it was our responsibility as parents to support the school not only through tuition but also every week in the Sunday collection and other areas of stewardship in the parish.

A Catholic parish school is just that, a parish school, supported by everyone in the parish. Grateful seniors who may have gone to grade school free of charge at their parish many years ago, members of the parish like me who value the ideals of a faith based education that turns out respectful young people and most importantly the parents of these kids that are receiving this wonderful education and experience at such a true value.

Fr. Janton has told us all recently about the economic times we face in our parish and particularly in our school with the declining enrollment. It is imperative that everyone shares in the responsibility of supporting the school that plays such an enormous role in our parish and community. Having spent my entire life in this parish I have seen how important this school's viability is, not only to the parish but the entire community. It would be a shame for us to lose such an important part of Abington that has been so good to mine and many thousands of other families through the years. I would hope you all feel the same way and keep this in mind while your kids are here and beyond, we need your help!

I would hope someday that my grandchildren could attend school here as a 3rd generation, but not for a very long time to come I'm sure.

Thank you very much for your time.