

- I Our location here in Hanover, near, not only to the site of the founding of the first American Catholic elementary school in Baltimore, MD, in 1809, but also to the location of the founding of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph in Emmitsburg, MD. The foundress who accomplished this and more is of course St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first native-born American canonized by the Church. She is the patron saint of Catholic schools and we recently celebrated her feast day on January 4. It is appropriate to remember St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and her historic contributions to Catholic Schools because today begins a week when the Catholic Church in the United States celebrates Catholic Schools.
- A. Here at St. Joseph Parish School we are fortunate to have a great faculty and staff led by our principal, Mrs. Melissa Connahey. Also, not all areas of the diocese have a Catholic High School as close to them as Delone Catholic is to us. I will say more about them in a moment. What all Catholic schools have in common is a tradition of faith-centered education. Our schools excel because they are not just a human endeavor, as good as our teachers are. Rather our Catholic schools excel because the foundation of Catholic education is Jesus Christ.

- B. The Gospels, from which our students hear and read on a regular if not daily basis, provide an extraordinary example of how young people should be formed to reach their God given potential. Catholic schools are tasked with developing programs, courses and activities that support students in deepening a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Students in Catholic schools are challenged beyond just homework and tests because they are tasked with answering the essential question of what God is asking them to do with their lives.
- C. I was at a meeting at Delone Catholic High School this past week where we discussed the charism of the high school. One of the items discussed was a “personal vocation.” This idea is about to what God is calling each student upon graduation and into the future. Now and in the past Delone Catholic has been known as a “college prep” school. It has done and continues to do a fine job of preparing students for college. However, times change and that was part of our discussion at the meeting.
- D. For a number of reasons we can no longer think that 90% or more of the seniors at Delone Catholic will immediately upon graduation leave their home and go to a four year college/university to earn a bachelor’s degree in a particular field. Some seniors are deciding to go to a local community college for a

couple of years and live at home. Some do not feel the need for college and enroll in a trade school. Others join the work force or enter the armed services. For some students they see the economic advantage in doing this because they will not have a large college debt at the end of four years and some begin earning money as they are training in a trade school. Men and women are needed in many trades and can earn a nice living. Just call a certified electrician or plumber to do work at your home. See what that costs.

- E. This diversity of where graduates are headed after graduation is why Delone Catholic is looking to emphasize the idea of a personal vocation. Each student needs to consider what God is asking him/her to do with their lives. Who is God calling them to be? This is not to say Delone Catholic has not done this in the past. It has. However, now and into the near future even more attention needs to be given to prepare students for the increased diversity of options facing graduates in the world today.
- F. Local business owners who hire Delone Catholic graduates tell us that Delone graduates have a good work ethic and a high level of maturity. They show up for work and are ready to take on responsibility. The motto of the school is "Be doers of the Word." Who is the Word? Jesus. Be doers of Jesus. Listen to his call

in your life. Teachers at Delone Catholic help students to discover their calling so as to serve the Lord and at the same time have a fulfilling life. While discerning their calling the students learn to form healthy moral attitudes and a personal prayer life.

- G. As you know the students at Delone Catholic are called the squires. In the middle ages a squire was an armor bearer for a knight. A squire served a knight as his attendant. The squire would sometimes carry the knight's flag into battle with his master. It is an easy jump to understand Jesus as the knight and the squire serving him. On a practical level Mr. Delone, who was very generous in financially funding the high school at its beginning, was an attorney, an esquire in this area.
- H. In addition, Catholic schools are family friendly. Much of that stems from Catholic theology which says parents are the first teachers of their children, and especially so in the faith. Parents have a say in what is and is not taught in a Catholic school. Catholic schools are unique communities where faith, learning and family come together to transform the lives of young people.
- I. Finally, Catholic schools in the diocese of Harrisburg are subsidized by the parishes. Consequently, tuition is not as much as you might think. Plus, scholarships and tuition assistance are available. Pray that our

students here at St. Joseph School and Delone Catholic may all “Be doers of the Word.”