



# CATHOLIC SCHOOL CHRONICLE

DECEMBER 2014

## FROM THE DESK OF THE SUPERINTENDENT . . .

It is difficult to miss the fact that Christmas will soon be upon us. The department stores began setting out their decorations as early as September. The local radio stations starting playing round the clock Christmas/holiday music at the beginning of November. Seasonal colored light displays have been placed on light poles. The Hallmark Channel has been showing holiday-themed programs for months. Last week, while looking through my television guide, I spotted a favorite Christmas movie, the 1953 version of a Christmas Carol with Alastair Sim as Ebenezer Scrooge. Scrooge has a reputation as a cruel and unforgiving man who makes life difficult for everyone in his path. He is visited on Christmas Eve by the ghost of Jacob Marley who used to be a partner in the firm that Scrooge took over. Jacob Marley has come to warn Scrooge that he had better repent for his sins and change his ways before it is too late. To help Scrooge make the change, he was visited by three spirits who helped him understand why he became so cruel and what he could do to improve. Scrooge was frightened enough as well as ashamed of what he had done and resolved to change his ways. He did! As we begin the liturgical season of Advent, the readings that we hear carry a similar message. Jesus said to His disciples, "Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come." (Mark 13:33-37) We should always be mindful that our time on earth is short and that we must use the talents given to us by God for good. Remember that the birth of Jesus Christ is the real meaning of Christmas. Jesus became human, was born a baby, lived and suffered with us and died for our sins. Now that is the real reason to celebrate Christmas Day! May each of you and your families have a Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year!

## DIOCESAN SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT . . .

Sixty years ago, St. Francis Xavier School first opened its doors to students. The school began as a one level school building with four grades. The faculty consisted of two teachers who lived at St. Paul's Convent. This school year, we welcomed 208 students in kindergarten through eighth grade under the leadership of Nathan Wright. In addition to 10 core subject teachers that are certified in the areas that they teach, the school also has full time teachers in the areas of Art, Library and Media, and Physical Education. Spanish is offered to all students once a week, and the school has a full time Guidance Counselor. We have fourteen classrooms equipped to the standards of 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning, newly renovated administrative offices, a computer lab, and ipads and chromebooks for student use throughout the week. We also have a brand new playground to be built this year. Most importantly we have a vibrant Sacramental life. This Sacramental life includes a weekly school Mass, participation in the daily Mass in the Chapel, celebration of events in the Church calendar, and opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration and Confession. Our school's identity as Catholic is foundational to our educational model. We desire to educate each child as a unique person made in the image of God and work with families as essential to the most meaningful developmental success.

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### DID YOU KNOW?

These are some additional tips designed to help principals (new and seasoned) fulfill their leadership roles:

**Put children first**-Don't let media or political agendas get in the way of deciding what's best for your students' needs and learning.

**Connect with other principals and administrators**-Find out what they are doing in their school. See what is and isn't working for them and come up with solutions together.

**Embrace technology**-Realize that it's here to stay.. now learn how to become a leader in it.

**Keep the Catholic Schools' Office informed**-They can be allies or your critics, so be sure to ask for advice and let them know stories of your journey along the way.

**Remember the #1 rule of customer service**-When it comes to your students, faculty, and parents; you should always treat them with kindness.

**A NOTE FROM THE ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT. . .**

As we continue to lead in our Catholic schools, it is necessary to be in the “thinking mood” as it relates to moving our schools forward. Good thinkers are always in demand. A person who knows “how” may always have a job, but the person who knows “why” will always be someone’s boss or leader. Good thinkers solve problems, they never lack ideas that can build an organization, and they always have hope for a better future.

John Maxwell studied successful people for forty years and though the diversity he found among them was astounding, he found that they were alike in one way: how they thought/ or currently think! He believes that being a good thinker isn’t just one thing. It consists of several specific thinking skills. View the list below and see how many thinking skills you possess as a leader:

- ~Seeing the *Wisdom of Big-Picture Thinking*
- ~Unleashing the *Potential of Focused Thinking*
- ~Discovering the *Joy of Creative Thinking*
- ~Recognizing the *Importance of Realistic Thinking*
- ~Releasing the *Power of Strategic Thinking*
- ~Feeling the *Energy of Possibility Thinking*
- ~Embracing the *Lessons of Reflective Thinking*
- ~Questioning the *Acceptance of Popular Thinking*
- ~Encouraging the *Participation of Shared Thinking*
- ~Experiencing the *Satisfaction of Unselfish Thinking*
- ~Enjoying the *Return of Bottom-Line Thinking*

**SACS ACCREDITATION . . .**

The Catholic schools office is finishing up school visits in December. We are viewing and assisting schools with providing evidence/artifacts for their Self Assessments (5 AdvancED Standards). During these visits, the schools will upload their final diagnostics/documents into their final Accreditation Report. After these visits, our office will determine the 6-8 schools that will be visited by the AdvancED External Review Team in the spring of 2015.

On a System’s level, we are analyzing data from our Self Assessment, Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostics (surveys form stakeholders), and Student Performance Data (Iowa Assessment, ACRE, ACT, etc.) which will assist us with setting goals and creating our strategic plan/action plan for our diocese.

**MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF BISHOP ROBERT J. BAKER, S.T.D. . . .**

As Bishop of Birmingham, Bishop Baker is responsible for a diocese that consists of 54 parishes and 19 missions, within a 39 county area of Alabama (28,091 square miles). Bishop Baker oversees Diocesan Administration, 12 Advisory Boards, Diocesan Tribunal, Chancellor, Clergy/Religious Laity, Deaneries, Media Relations, Publications and Information, Child and Youth Protection, and the Office of Vocations.

Bishop Baker, is supported by two assistants: Donna Mealer, Executive Assistant to the Bishop, and Amanda Lorino, Secretary to the Bishop.

Mrs. Mealer manages Bishop Baker's calendar, arranges travel reservations and accommodations, prepares correspondence to priests/parishes, coordinates grant applications, organizes and coordinates special events, prepares agendas, meeting notices, minutes, and general correspondence as needed. Mrs. Mealer also works closely with the Office of Religious Education to schedule yearly Confirmations.

Mrs. Lorino provides telephone support, handling calls of a general nature, and directs calls as appropriate. She is responsible for preparing general correspondence for Bishop Baker, managing a database of contact names and addresses, and maintains the files for the Office of the Bishop. Mrs. Lorino also prepares and distributes the Clergy Bulletin under the direction of the Bishop and Executive Assistant. All incoming mail to Bishop Baker is opened and organized by Mrs. Lorino.

The Office of the Bishop is committed to providing professional, efficient, and confidential support to publics and other departments of the Diocese, while coordinating the day-to-day operations of the Chancery as the extended presence of the Bishop.



## RESOURCES

The Thomas Legislative Resources on the Internet is a good place to stay current on what is happening in Congress with regard to specific legislation. To view this information, go to . . . [www.NCEA.org](http://www.NCEA.org).

### [Marketing and Communications Resources](#)

Catholic schools are exceptional learning communities centered on strengthening the whole human person. Marketing that message to build enrollment and philanthropic support requires a compelling values proposition, a strong plan, committed leadership as well as continuing training and education.

### [Lenten Season](#)

NCEA shares these resources for Catholic educators to support the renewal, recommitment, and forgiveness of their faith, both as individuals and as professionals in Catholic schools.

### [Advent Season](#)

NCEA shares these resources for Catholic educators to support the penitence, reaffirmation, peace, and joy of their faith, both as individuals and as professionals in Catholic schools.

*“Behold, the  
virgin shall  
conceive and  
bear a son,  
and they shall  
call his name  
Immanuel”*

*Matthew 1:23*

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## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**NCEA Webinars** cover trending and need to know topics relevant to your career in Catholic education. All participants will receive the recorded webinar for reference and inclusion among other professional learning resources. See ([www.ncea.org](http://www.ncea.org))

### ***A Closer Look at the National Standards and Benchmarks for effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools: Academic Excellence***

Tuesday, December 2, 2014 at 4 pm and 7 pm

Presented by Dr. Lorraine Ozar, Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, Loyola University Chicago

### ***Keep Playing: Being Recruited to Play NAIA College Sports***

Tuesday, December 9, 2014

at 4 pm and 7 pm

Presented by Angela Crawford, Manager of Marketing with the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA)

This webinar will provide athletic directors and coaches with information about eligibility and requirements for student athletes who play at the collegiate level for colleges/universities affiliated with the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA).

Webinar series participants will be able to:

Learn of an option that exists to NCAA participation for student-athletes.

Understand the eligible sports and academic requirements for students enrolling in NAIA-supported colleges/universities.

Support Catholic student-athletes pursuing athletic, academic, and character development in their post-high school careers.

**UPCOMING EVENTS/DEADLINES**

- ⇒ December 9, 2014 — Principals’ Meeting
- ⇒ December 15, 2014 — Pictures for Catholic Schools Week Due
- ⇒ December 19, 2014 — Last Day of School for Christmas Break
- ⇒ December 25, 2014 — Merry Christmas



*May Peace be  
Your Gift at  
Christmas and  
Your Blessing  
all Year  
Through!*

**OUR VISION AND MISSION**

**OUR VISION:**

Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Birmingham provide an excellent educational experience in the Catholic tradition enabling all students to develop their God-given talents.

**OUR MISSION:**

The mission of the Diocese of Birmingham Catholic School System is to educate our students to seek God in Truth and for loving service by teaching the message of the Gospel, forming a community of faith, providing the whole child with a Catholic and Christ-centered environment, and inspiring all to reach their full academic and spiritual potential.

**CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE**

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