

Catholic education is an attempt to teach the right thing and to learn the right thing. Neither objective is easy to do.

It never has been easy. Look at the disciples in tonight's gospel. Jesus taught them to rely on him and nothing else. But they had learned the wrong thing. They had learned that if you wanted to be saved you had to get rich. Jesus said it's easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter heaven, and the disciples asked, "Then who can be saved?" Where did they ever get the idea that you had to be rich to succeed in heaven? Did Jesus teach that? No. They got that idea from society, where the rich had all the power and the poor had no hope. Jesus had to be the greatest teacher who ever lived. But even the disciples who spent every day with him still learned the wrong thing. That's how powerful society's messages can be over the teaching of Jesus Christ.

It is the greatest hope of parents, teachers, and clergy that our kids learn the right thing. It tears us up when kids learn that greed is more important than charity, or that all problems can best be solved with violence. We hate it when kids learn the wrong thing. But quite honestly, sometimes it's not their fault. Sometimes we don't teach the right thing. We support movies, video games, and music that glorify violence. We stockpile our homes with firearms and stockpile our mouths with words of hate. We flee from commitments we make to family and neighborhoods. We kill criminals who have killed because we believe killing is wrong. We conceive children irresponsibly and abort the ones we don't want to bother with. We even go to war to show that violence is wrong. Is it any wonder our kids get confused? Quite honestly, sometimes we don't teach the right thing. It is hard to teach kids to turn away from violence when we support violence as a means to solve problems on death row, in Kosovo, and in our own homes.

Catholic education is an attempt to teach the right thing and to learn the right thing. We have to devote ourselves to both. As parents and educators we must be so drenched in the teachings of Christ that all our actions become consistent with our beliefs. We cannot simply send children to a Catholic school and figure that's the end of it. We must live our faith at home, after school, and every weekend. What we are teaching is not a body of knowledge, but a way of life. As students, our graduates must be so drenched in the teachings of Christ that all their actions become consistent with their beliefs. Graduates, when we send you forth tonight we give you a mission and a challenge. We are placing you in high schools not as weapons of war, but as makers of peace. You must bring there the message of non-violence, of charity, and co-operation. Our society needs you there.

Jesus, the great teacher, drove his message home by telling the disciples what they'd have to give up. They had to give up their possessions and their preferences; they had to give up the comfort of keeping quiet when they should speak up for Christ. My sisters and brothers, we must be willing to give up our fear of one another, our isolation from our neighbors, our ignorance of the bible, our reticence to pray, our preference not to be noticed. We must be willing to give up our

hesitation to live the gospel of love. If we give all that up, we will gain a peaceful society now and the reign of God for ever.