

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Dr. Eugenia Kowalczyk, Principal - Catholic Identity

Identity is complex. Many of us would describe ourselves based on our personal, social, professional, or cultural characteristics. I might describe myself as being Italian, or that I am a wife, daughter, or sister. Further I share that I am an educator. Ultimately, I could articulate that I am Catholic and a person of faith. While these labels appear simple, the totality of their parts creates a kaleidoscope of what it means to be human.

Catholic identity is at the heart of Catholic education. Who we are as people of God within our educational communities, our family, and our church is shaped and influenced by our life experiences and our social interactions. Catholic schools serve as the fertile soil where seeds of faith are sowed and nurtured. How blessed we are knowing that when we send our children to a Catholic school we can rest assured that their social, academic, physical, emotional, and spiritual needs are looked after. What a precious gift we have in Catholic education.

The great philosopher Thomas Groome (2002) explained how, “we need a sense of identity to live humanly, without it we literally feel lost. From the Latin *identitas*, meaning “the same, repeatedly,” identity is that which holds together a continuous sense of our human “being” as a person or a community. It is the metaphorical glue that binds who we are as individuals and who we are in community. It is who we are and how we live...identity is the center that holds...otherwise...things fall apart.”

Catholic identity provides each of us to view the world using a Catholic lens. Together we strive to understand and develop a deeper relationship with Christ.

According to another great philosopher Walter Feinberg (2006), religious identity is constructed systematically and formally across many landscapes; school, church, and home. It is in these different places “where students learn the practices, rituals, beliefs, and commitments that distinguish their religion from others, and where they take on the identity of a specific faith community.”

Realizing that the faith formation of our children is central to their education, we collaborate to understand the shared responsibility between parents, educators, clergy, and community. Together we work in mutual cooperation and understanding towards a common vision of what comprises faith formation of children within the broader landscape of personal identity.

Inspired by the late Sr. Annata Brockman to love tenderly, act justly, and walk humbly with our Lord, let us remain faithful to the commitment of Catholic education. Might we never forget the most precious gift of all; our students each one created in the likeness and image of God. Their Catholic identity, inspired by the Holy Spirit, calls us all to give witness to our faith and remember that Christ is the reason for Catholic schools. In answering the question, “who do you say I am?” the response, “a child of God” paves the understanding of how together, in communion, we nurture our Catholic identity.