

August 24, 2008

Catholic schools are critical to the educational mission of the Church. I have often written about the important contribution that our Catholic elementary and high schools make in the formation of our young people. I direct my comments here to our only Catholic college, Calumet College of St. Joseph.

Calumet College of St. Joseph was founded by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in 1950, under the inspiration and guidance of Father James Birkley, C.P.P.S., and Father John Lefko, C.P.P.S. The vision and sustained commitment of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood have been critical to the continued success of the college.

Why have the Missionaries of the Precious Blood and the Diocese of Gary invested so much in Calumet College of St. Joseph over these past 58 years when there is a plethora of colleges and universities so near to us? Why do Catholics and non-Catholics make our college their college of choice?

As a Catholic college, Calumet College of St. Joseph offers much more than academic excellence with religious supplements such as a Department of Religious Studies and a strong campus ministry program. It offers academic excellence with reverence for human reason, human longing, and human culture. It offers authentic values and ethical guidelines as well as a transcendent vision of life's meaning.

Like all of our Catholic schools, our college is rooted in Jesus and in His values that teach us that our purpose can be fulfilled and our happiness can be found primarily in relationships: in our relationship with God and in our relationships with one another. Thus, it values so highly the life and dignity of

every human person. It treasures the diversity that is present within our community.

Calumet College of St. Joseph strives to be a faith community that is student-centered and fosters an atmosphere that can be described in such interpersonal terms as mutual concern, respect, interest, and support. After the example of Jesus, it strives to form “men and women for others.” Throughout His life and most especially in His death, Jesus demonstrated self-emptying love. Jesus has told us and shown us that happiness and fulfillment are found in giving, not receiving; in dying to self for others. We are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers.

Our college seeks to enlarge the hearts of students as well as their minds and seeks to develop within them an awareness of the needs of the poor and their social responsibility to stand in solidarity with them. Catholic social teaching teaches that it’s not just what we take from society, but what we give to society and our culture that matters. We must open our hearts and hands to those in need, and we must also address systemically the causes of injustice in our society, injustices such as racism, the plight of undocumented immigrants, the de-valuing of human life from the unborn to the aged.

The former Jesuit Provincial, Father Kolvenbach, remarked that: “The real measure of our colleges and universities lies in who our students become, whether or not they are engaged in their communities.” Our students tend to stay in the Calumet region, and we anticipate that their education and formation at our college will enlarge their hearts as well as their minds, make them more aware of the needs of the less fortunate, and motivate them to use their potential to make Northwest Indiana a better place, a place where there is more truth, love, justice, and peace.

It may not be well known that Calumet College of St. Joseph serves more minority students than any other private college in our state. It recognizes and builds upon the rich diversity with which we are blessed in Northwest Indiana. It is the goal of our college to help improve the job opportunities for our students and the quality of life for them and their families. Truly, there is an important place for Catholic higher education in Northwest Indiana and we are grateful that we have that place in Calumet College of St. Joseph.