

During Catholic Schools Week, children and youth, teachers and parents, and Catholics all over the country celebrate the gift of Catholic education. You are a part of a very special community. Catholic schools today welcome all children. They are safe and friendly communities where children learn, share, and care for others.

Many people make up your Catholic school community. There are teachers, children and parents. There is a pastor, a principal, a school nurse, and a custodian. There are lunchroom helpers and teacher aides. A lot of people help make your Catholic school a special place to learn and grow. At your school you learn about science, math, history, and grammar and all of the subjects that students everywhere study. But, what makes a Catholic education different is that every day you learn about God, about being Catholic, and about how to follow Jesus and be a holy person. This is a great gift that you will have for a lifetime!

Catholic Schools Week always begins the last Sunday in January. This year, it begins on Sunday, January 30, 2010. Every year a theme helps us focus on the gift of a Catholic education. The theme for this year is *Dividends for Life: Faith, Knowledge, Morals, Discipline*. All of the Catholic schools in the United States—there are around 8,000 of them—will celebrate how the faith, knowledge, morals, and discipline that Catholic schools develop in their students helps our world today.

Think about these questions:

Faith is my belief and trust in God.

How does my Catholic school help my faith grow?

Knowledge is information and truth about life.

How does my Catholic school help me to learn about life and about God?

Morals are the habits that help us do the right things.

How does my Catholic school help me make the right choices?

Discipline is choosing activities and habits that will help us follow Jesus more closely.

What habits do I learn at my Catholic School to help me follow Jesus?

Spend a few minutes with a special prayer every day during Catholic Schools Week.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

Write some special prayers and blessings for your school, your class, and for the people you share your school day with.

Write a prayer thanking God for your parents and family who send you to a Catholic school where you can learn about God's love.

Stop when you see a symbol that reminds you about being Catholic and say a simple prayer of praise to God for creating you.

Read a Bible story and write a reflection or prayer that expresses what you learned from God's Word.