



RESOURCES

5 Ways

to Cultivate a Parish Community that Supports Your Catholic School



*The School and Parish
Communities working together*

1. Welcome the pastor who supports the school “from the pulpit.”

Catholic schools are a mission of the Church and a mission of the parish. The pastor should be an advocate of the school and be proactive in speaking to everything that the school offers. The pastor helps to promote the school—its mission, its brand, its successes and the value of the education.

2. Be present with one another.

Principals and students also speak from the pulpit during important times of the year: Catholic Schools Week, Fall Open Houses and at the close of the school year. Students speaking near graduation time can share what the school has meant to them and their plans. The school may have a display table at the back of the church, often staffed by students in uniform and current parents who can answer questions.

Parishioners are invited to school events and Masses and to volunteer at the school—as tutors, readers, coaches and mentors.

3. Manage parishioner solicitations and their timing with diplomacy and attention to other parish business.

The parish may need to synchronize timing of financial giving requests from the school with other efforts—a diocesan capital campaign, for instance—to avoid “fundraising fatigue.” Additionally, the school should coordinate promotions with those for the parish’s religious education program.

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MONSIGNOR JOHN MARINE

*Pastor, St. Bede the Venerable Parish
St. Katharine Drexel Catholic School
(Holland, PA)*

“I asked to be assigned to a parish with a Catholic school... It is important for me as pastor to speak about it, to write about it in my Sunday column, and to repeat over and over again whenever I gather at meetings how personally happy I am to be in a parish that has a Catholic school.”

4. Write and customize a compelling letter that conveys your case.

- Use “I” and “You” but mostly “You”
- Share the goals for the Annual Fund and how previous dollars have been used
- Personalize:
 - segmented lists
 - Dear <<First Name>> (not Dear Friend)
 - personal notes from board members, staff and volunteers
 - handwritten envelopes to largest donors
- Make your letter easy to read:
 - plenty of white space around the copy
 - indented paragraphs; no paragraphs longer than seven lines; variety of paragraph length
 - bullets for emphasis and oomph
 - subheads
 - spare but consistent underlining to call attention to key words and phrases

5. Say thank you.

- Express gratitude regularly, acknowledging all forms of giving: the time, talent and treasure shared by parishioners
- Say “thank you” through personalized communications, bulletin inserts, Annual Fund reports and notes from students at Thanksgiving
- Include parishioners on the school’s Christmas card list



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