

# **‘Hall Pass’ provides added layer of school security**

written by Dwain Hebda |



A new school security program ‘Hall Pass’ is already paying dividends

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# **No more snow days in future? Pilot program = ‘Maybe’**

written by Dwain Hebda |



'Cyber days' piloted in Catholic Schools, may make snow days obsolete

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## Fast Facts

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |

A breakdown of Catholic schools yields some surprising statistics

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## Schools celebrate during Catholic Schools Week

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |



Range of activities highlight parents, students, school leaders Jan. 26 to Feb 1

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## **Mount St. Mary shows holiday spirit, school unity**

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |



Video project brings together entire staff, student body and faculty for filming

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## Catholic schools are instruments of evangelization

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |

The New Evangelization calls the Church to spread the Gospel — to bring joy of the Good News of Jesus Christ to a world in desperate need of authentic hope. Catholic schools are called to be a place where families experience grace and encounter the faith frequently. More than ever there is a need for strong Catholic schools to bring families and children to completeness in the image of Jesus Christ. Catholic schools are at the very heart of the New Evangelization.

In Pope John Paul II's 1999 apostolic exhortation, "The Church in America" he stressed that "It is essential that every possible effort be made to ensure that Catholic schools, despite financial difficulties, continue to provide a Catholic education to the poor and the marginalized in society. It will never be possible to free the needy from their poverty unless they are first freed from the impoverishment arising from the lack of an adequate education. Catholic schools must seek not only to impart a quality education from the technical and professional standpoint, also and above all provide for the integral formation of the human person. "

He also states that the Church in America is called to take up the apostolic mandate given us by the Lord and respond with loving generosity to the fundamental task of evangelization. Yet again Pope Francis in "Evangelii Gaudium" (The Joy of the Gospel) is giving us a blueprint for evangelization in the 21st century.

There are three key elements that I have observed in the Catholic schools in our diocese that

demonstrate evangelization.

The first is the support provided families and the call to service to the poor.

The second is the planting of seeds of faith.

The third is the power of the Mass.

It is a blessing to experience the support our school families provide in times of crisis whether it be death, fire, devastation from weather-related events or caring for those who are hurting from emotional issues. Not only do the students in the school participate in drives to collect money and needed supplies, but just as importantly offer prayers for those in need. Community organizations supporting the less fortunate have received much-needed help in collections from our students in Catholic schools.

As I visit classrooms throughout the diocese, there is strong evidence that our religion programs are planting the seeds of faith at every grade level. Students easily and willingly express what they are being taught in their daily religion classes. Scripture as well as Church teachings are being taught across the diocese. The social teachings of the Church are integrated in the core curriculum where applicable. The faith is also being carried into the home through our students. Both Catholic and non-Catholic parents have expressed how their children have learned how to pray and expect their parents to pray with them. Non-Catholic parents whose children are attending Catholic schools have chosen to go through RCIA to learn more about the Catholic faith and many have made the decision to convert to Catholicism.

There is much to say about the opportunity to attend Mass as a school community at least weekly, but more commonly twice a week. The privilege of receiving the Word and the Eucharist at Mass is unique to the educational process in our Catholic schools. The weekly Mass offers the children the opportunity to hear the Word and how it applies to our daily lives. It also provides the opportunity for the students to actively participate through lecturing and providing the music for the Mass. This is likely the reason that statistical data indicates that Catholic school students are more likely to pray daily, attend church more often, retain a Catholic identity as an adult and donate more to the Church.

There is a need for strong commitment and renewed investment of time, talent and treasure from parents, parishioners and alumni to ensure that Catholic schools remain instruments of the New Evangelization.

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