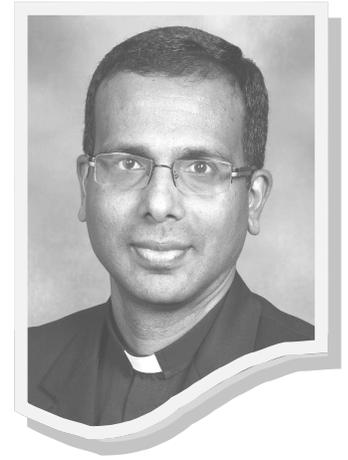




## From the Pastor



### Catholic Education: Part 4

**C**atholic schools have the unique capacity to academically connect reason and faith—science and religion. This is an especially important feature for our young people today. Indeed, the Center for Applied Research (CARA) at Georgetown University suggests the same. St. Mary's Press recently published the CARA research study it commissioned in a publication titled, "Going, Going, Gone: The Dynamics of Disaffiliation in Young Catholics." Its findings note that the average median age when formerly Catholic teens and young adults left the faith was 13. Just under half (45 percent) said their disagreement with the Church's stance on a political issue important to them was at least "somewhat" important to their decision to leave. This is not surprising given the cultural wars, social issues, and divisive political polarization in our wider society. But what was very surprising was that 36 percent said that the perception that their Catholicism conflicts with their scientific learning was at least "somewhat" important to their decision to leave the Church. Thirty-six percent! This is due to public education where God has no role or even a mention of God or prayer is an abomination. Catholic education is the answer to this. When confronted with a science competitive with his/her Catholic faith, many young people simply leave their faith instead of delving deeper into it. Our young people don't know that their Catholic faith and their science go together. They complement each other. Or as St. John Paul II so eloquently noted in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth . . ."

One of the more challenging findings of the CARA study commissioned by St. Mary's Press, "Going, Going, Gone: The Dynamics of Disaffiliation in Young Catholics," is this observation: "The authors of the CARA study do not perceive any significant way for the Church to attract many who have left to return to the faith. While historically some do return, often as they age or because of a 'life-cycle' effect, there seems to be a difference in the millennial generation, particularly with respect to the idea of not wanting to force religion on their own children. That suggests that this life-cycle effect may no longer be true" (p. 32).

Younger parents—"millennials"—do not come back. It used to be that when young adults had children, they often returned to the practice of their faith and the habit of Sunday Mass. But the most recent findings suggest that—today—young parents do not necessarily return to the practice of their faith once they have children. Therefore, Catholic schools reach out to evangelize not only the child but also the parents. The mission of Christ has Catholic schools to bring our parents back to Christ.

Catholic schools do not exist simply for the economic and social well-being of our students—or even of our larger society. Yes! We can and should be proud of the academic and social achievements of our graduates. But, we must also remember that these achievements mean nothing if the child and the parents are not brought closer to Christ and closer to the commitment they made at the baptism of their child.

—Fr. Jose Thomas Mudakodiyil