

ON LUTHERAN SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION

REV. JOHN A. FRAHM III

From the heritage of the Lutheran Reformation schools have been a crucial facet of fostering children in the saving truth of the Gospel. In our day, as we face cultural decay and moral challenges confront our precious children at younger and younger ages Lutheran schools today face an uphill battle not only for passing along a strong moral grounding but also to proclaim the good news of our crucified and risen Lord to all sinners who are very much in need of the healing balm of forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation of our crucified and risen Lord.

Our Lutheran heritage, including the Missouri Synod, has known a strong tradition of firm and thorough academic considerations along with an emphasis on Christian faith and life. This happens through orientation to the Bible, the inspired Word of God, the Catechism, and in teaching the worship life of the church, not only in class, but also in chapel services and use of hymns in various contexts. Being a believer is also being a worshiper of the Triune God, but especially to be a receiver of the Gospel gifts through Word and Sacrament. Prayer, also, is a very key ingredient to making clear that the teaching of God's Word in that Lutheran context is not merely an academic exercise (a class) but something that relates to faith in Christ and to being in fellowship with the Lord has His baptized children.

Lutheran schools have a duty to uphold sound academic standards. When many school systems are lessening standards and failing to equip our children for productive service in the world, the Lutheran school has a firm understanding of vocation and how God calls each of us to various callings in our life through His creation, through where He puts us, and through the abilities He gives and cultivates in us. Knowledgeable teachers and staff who continue to grow in knowledge and in ways to convey that knowledge are most valuable resources. The best teachers are the ones who understand their own need to continue learning, growing, and applying that knowledge. In the context of a Lutheran school that is a treasure applied most clearly with the biblical insight of the distinction between the Lord's law and His gospel, and the Lord's call to make disciples of all people for Christ. This includes the families of school children who do not yet have a church home in which to hear Christ.

The pastor and the Lutheran school work together in fostering not only a high zeal for the task but a continuing competency in carrying out the task. Study of God's Word, understanding the tenets of the faith, and practicing the prayer and worship life of Christians in a churchly way is an avenue in which the Holy Spirit continues to call, gather, enlighten and sanctify the whole Christian church on earth and keep it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. This is what sets the parochial (parish) school apart. Academics, Bible, catechism, and the worship life are a tapestry woven together for the whole being of the boys and girls entrusted to the Lutheran school. This is done in love from God as He expresses it through the congregation and the staff of the school.

The congregation that is given the task of fostering and nurturing a Lutheran school is somewhat rare in our day. But this means it is every more crucial. For the task is not only benefitting society, church or this world but that these children will be with us in the joys of eternity with Christ in the kingdom of the Lamb which has no end. For after all evangelism and missions is ended there is remaining for eternity the worship of the Lamb who was slain and yet lives and reigns forever. Therefore the Lutheran school has its eyes always looking ahead to that through the Church for these young ones who come through the doors of the school for that brief time.