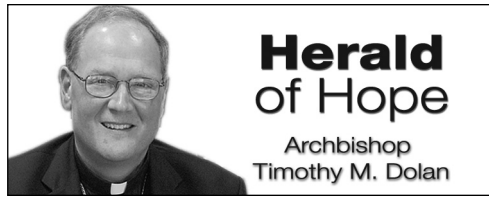


Catholic schools work

At first it was kind of gloomy. Scholars from the Pew Center for Research on Religion in America, and from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) spent an hour and a half or so helping us bishops understand the data on the Pew Center's recent study on religion, with special consideration for the Catholic Church in America. It was enlightening for us bishops to hear this at our meeting last June.

Like I said, there was indeed some undeniably sobering news: Yes, more adults were leaving the Catholic Church; fewer were worshipping weekly at Sunday Mass; fewer still approaching the sacrament of penance; only 53 percent of Catholic adults were married in the church, and divorce rates for Catholic couples were approaching the national rate; our Catholic married couples were having fewer children; while vocations to the priesthood and religious life were going up a bit, the numbers were still way too low; and knowledge of the essentials of the faith hardly got a passing grade.

We were all ready for an earlier cocktail



**Herald
of Hope**

Archbishop
Timothy M. Dolan

hour after the gloomy news when along came some glowing news that I find especially timely to share with you now:

- yes, more adults were leaving the church ... but, those alumni of our *Catholic schools* were much more likely to remain faithful;

- fewer were worshipping weekly at Sunday Mass ... but, those who had attended *Catholic schools* were much more loyal;

- graduates of *Catholic schools* approach confession more often;

- those who had gone to *Catholic schools* marry in the church at a higher percentage, report more fulfilling, lifelong marriages, and have more children;

- young people in our Catholic grade schools, high schools, and colleges are much more likely to think seriously about

becoming a sister, brother, or priest;

- and alumni of our *Catholic schools* grasped the essentials of church teaching and the Bible at a significantly higher rate.

What we've known in the gut for decades is now empirically proven: *Catholic schools* work; they are the most effective agents of catechesis, spiritual, moral, and mental formation, and evangelization that we have.

If you want to tackle the hefty challenges facing the church today, you can't go wrong in supporting our *Catholic schools*.

Are they perfect? Nope! Do they have problems of their own? Yep! Does this mean we should ignore our other programs of religious education? You know better.

But, are our Catholic schools worth it? You bet your life they are!

Parents, principals, teachers, parishes, school boards, benefactors, pastors ... thank you for getting us to the start of another promising year of Catholic schools. They work. The verdict is in. Your sweat, sacrifice, and scrimping are all worth it.

A blessed new school year!

Reprinted with permission of the *Catholic Herald*

■ Please call 1-877-665-8668 to subscribe.