

Parents praise Catholic education

We are the Gregory and Kelly Stewart family of Elmira. We have five children, who have attended or are attending Catholic schools in Elmira. Here they are:

• **Katie:** Katie is 18 years old and graduated from Notre Dame Catholic High School in June 2003. She previously attended all her younger years at Holy Family Catholic Schools. She has just completed one year at Corning Community College.

• **Marianne:** Marianne is 17 years old and will be a senior at Notre Dame this fall. She also previously attended Holy Family Catholic Schools.

• **Adam:** Adam, 15, just had his eighth-grade graduation from Holy Family Catholic Schools in June, and will be a freshman at Notre Dame this fall.

• **Laura:** Laura is 11, and will be in sixth grade at Holy Family Intermediate School this fall.

• **Bryan:** Bryan, 8, will be in second grade at Holy Family Primary School this fall.

Knowing that Kelly was the only one of us having a Catholic-school education (up to fourth grade), this was

a very important decision that we had to make.

There are many reasons that we chose to give our children a Catholic education. One reason is because the environment is more controlled and that there is more parent involvement. There is more respect and expectations of the students. In our home we are constantly teaching our children to respect others and to respect authority. Also, knowing that our children were learning at a higher education level than other schools was important to us.

We felt that the teachers were more interested in our children's education due to the fact that they themselves were making personal sacrifices to teach there. Also, they weren't just teaching academics, they were teaching God's word and love for one another. One personal example is when one of our sons was in kindergarten. He had left his snow pants in school for the Christmas holidays, and we noticed this after the school had closed. So we telephoned the teacher to ask her if there was any way that we could get into the school and get the snow pants home for the vacation. Without us knowing,

she took her own personal time and went to the school, and then she surprise-delivered the snow pants to our front door. Now that's what you call true dedication.

We liked the idea of uniforms. The uniforms reduced the chance of children being made fun of, and it teaches the children to look at others with an equal eye.

One of the most important reasons for having our children in a Catholic school is that it completes the circle of God-centered life. When Christianity is taught in the home and then a child is taught Christianity in school, then the circle is complete. Also, we like the fact that our children are able to have the freedom to learn and talk about God, and to pray and attend Mass.

After being a part of the Holy Family Schools and Notre Dame High School for a few years, we knew that we had made the right de-

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cision. Between getting to know the principals, school staff and other parents through volunteer work and other school social outings, we realized that this was a family organization. A place where parents are always welcome to help out and be a part of their children's education. Having the opportunity to be able to be a part of this environment for our children was definitely beneficial to our family. We thank God for the opportunity and blessings that a Catholic education has given our children and our family.

Gregory and Kelly Stewart of Elmira are the parents of five children, who all attended or are attending Catholic schools.

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