



**Catholic Schools Week 2024
Called to Witness:
Sacred Heart of Jesus
and the Immaculate Heart of Mary**

Reflection

Once, being before the Blessed Sacrament and having a little more leisure than usual, I felt wholly filled with this Divine Presence, and so powerfully moved by it that I forgot myself and the place in which I was.

I abandoned myself to this Divine Spirit and yielded my heart to the power of His love, He made me rest for a long time on His divine breast, where He discovered to me the wonders of His love and the inexplicable secrets of His Sacred Heart, which He had hitherto kept hidden from me.

Now He opened it to me for the first time, but in a way so real, so sensible, that it left me no room to doubt, though I am always in dread of deceiving myself.

~Vision of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque

As I have spent the last 10 years working on the Catholic Schools Week committee and being a parent who has raised four children in this wonderful place, I can look back and honestly say the journey was always moving forward to His Sacred Heart. This year's front theme is The Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The heart of Mary always leads us to His Heart, so as we honor them together this week, remembering who we are as Baptized Catholics, the hallways are filled with the reminders of what that identity calls us to....to be a witness.

It is from His Sacred Heart that we receive the blessings of His call to be a witness to His love. This year's CSW theme is an invitation to witness our faith, which calls us deeper to do the work Christ asks us to do. His heart is our mission and "Called to Witness" is this year's directive. The visuals are a sum of all that we have seen to represent the treasures of the Church and our faith which become the tools we need to witness to the world. The decorations over the last 10 years may seem to be an extension of Christmas decorations and perhaps that is the point of who we are at St. Raphael's and beyond. We are meant to be a Christmas and Easter people to a cold world that doesn't know His love. His heart burns for us, to know us, to love us, and to heal a broken world that doesn't know His love. He is more than a man that died on a cross, He is more than a baby that was born in a cold stable, He is the heart of this world that we barely understand. As you walk the hallways, let the visuals, quotes, prayers and devotions wash over you and then let it settle deeper into your soul of what that means for you personally. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand our faith at a deeper level. Sometimes a simple question in prayer, like "Lord, what do you want me to understand?" is all it takes to go deeper.

This week is like a walk down memory lane, uniting the first year to the last. The first year we extended the Christmas decorations with lights and snowflakes and created a winter wonderland of handmade paper snowflakes, made by our school kids, to reflect the uniqueness of each child's life sacred in His eyes. This year, we wove back in all the pieces into that winter scenery to reflect the deeper meaning of what it means to extend Christmas and the warmth of love in his Sacred heart. It is through His heart that the warmth of heaven is felt.

How He speaks that warmth of love to each soul varies depending upon how he made us. He is a personal God, and he knows our hearts better than we know our own and he uses everything He can to speak to us and we need everything of our faith to speak to the world by living differently and echo the warmth and joy of his love. Take a look at the list below of all the past CSW years and pack it into your toolbox to speak our faith, because who knows what

soul He will send to you that needs His love. Be ready, know our faith, be simple, pray and listen to our great Teacher, Jesus, and His Mother.

Let's look back on years past of CSW and see how the Holy Spirit works in moving us forward.

The themes each year have the purpose of drawing our hearts to a deeper reflection on some aspect of our faith.

- (2024) CALLED TO WITNESS: Sacred and Immaculate Heart: Visuals of our hearts united to theirs. Led by their love to be witnesses to the world.
- (2023) Divine Mercy: visuals and quotes from St. Faustina's Diary
- (2022) Miracles, with visuals of Mary's mantle leading us to the Christ Child
- (2021) St. Joseph and the symbol of the Lily and the lantern
- (2020) The Sweetness of Mary and The Gift of the Rosary
- (2019) Hope and the Holy Spirit, with the visual of winter and the little birds
- (2018) The Gift of Prayer
- (2017) Angels all around us, with visuals of floating feathers and little lights
- (2016) The Communion of Saints
- (2015) The Mystery of the Mass
- (2014) Casting our Colors (gifts and talents), symbolized by the visual of the rainbow
- (2013) The Snowflake, symbolizing the dignity of the individual

Notice that as we move forward in time, we draw closer and closer to Christ and everything behind us, paved the way. As we move forward in faith and out there into the cold world, we need the understanding our faith and with the knowledge that He is with us, we will be led. Praise God!!!!