

## What My Catholic Education Means to Me

I have been blessed to attend a Catholic school since kindergarten, starting every school day with a prayer. As I reflect on the significance of my Catholic education, a simple prayer comes to mind that I recited daily at St. Rita Catholic School. These five lines of prayer illustrate what my Catholic education means to me.

The prayer begins, **“Heavenly Father, I praise you and thank you for your great love, and I lift up this day for your blessing.”**\* A Catholic education is indeed a privilege and a wonderful gift from God and my parents. Catholic schools promote a high standard of excellence in an environment conducive to learning and open to religious expression. Every day I can express my love and gratitude for God by trying my best as a student, daughter, sister, friend, and child of God.

The prayer continues, **“With your help, I will live today as a responsible, generous, and honest person.”** Some of the most important lessons I have learned were not in English or math, but in theology. Theology classes have not only been a major source of my faith and knowledge of Catholicism, but they have also given me a distinct identity as a Catholic school student. They have helped to strengthen my Christian morals and encouraged me to make wise decisions.

The prayer continues, **“Like Jesus, I will try today to treat everyone I meet with dignity and respect.”** While some students may consider the rules promoted by Catholic schools as “strict”, these rules serve as guidelines for living as true followers of Christ. In order to spread the Good News, we must be like Christ to others, which means treating every person with respect.

The prayer continues, **“With Jesus’ spirit alive in me, I will witness my love by thinking of others first and myself last.”** The emphasis on service in my Catholic education has caused me to realize its importance and given me the desire to continue it throughout my adult life. Service is considered the ultimate display of Christian love; and our call to service requires us to devote our time, talent, and treasure to the poor and less fortunate.

The prayer concludes with, **“Help me today, Father, to put into action what I have said in words. I ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.”** Education is only as valuable as how we choose to use it. God gives us our talents so that we can share them with others, which makes developing our talents and skills just as important as using them to benefit others. “Amen”, meaning “I believe”, reminds us that all of our actions should represent our faith and love of Jesus Christ.

My Catholic education has taught me not just to appreciate classic literature, solve equations algebraically, and conjugate Spanish verbs. It has made me the person I am today, enriched by the life lessons and moral teachings that can be found in Catholic schools today.

\* “The Morning Offering” said daily at St. Rita Catholic School in Dallas, Texas