
(February 1, 2005) Lipinski Honor's Catholic School's Week on the House Floor

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Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 23, Honoring the contributions of Catholic schools. Catholic schools have been educating American children since the founding of our country. They continue to serve as an important complement to our public schools and other private institutions, providing top quality, values-added education for young students across the nation.

This honor is especially fitting during this current celebration of Catholic School 's Week, which is a joint project of the National Catholic Educational Association and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Since its introduction in 1974, Catholic School 's Week has celebrated community involvement in Catholic schools throughout the country. During this week, the dioceses and schools work to build community awareness and encourage parents to take full advantage of the benefits of Catholic elementary and secondary education. This year's theme is "Faith in Every Student". Catholic schools not only work to encourage religious faith in students, but they also have faith that every student is endowed with God-given value, has something important to contribute to society, and deserves every opportunity to grow intellectually, physically, and spiritually.

In my district, which is located in the Chicago Archdiocese, dozens of area Catholic schools have planned events for students, teachers, and parents to enjoy and celebrate Catholic School 's Week. At Saint Symphorosa students are participating in a community prayer service, a neighborhood ice cream social, and a variety of educational events. In addition, students are taking part in Vocation Appreciation Day, which highlights the many future opportunities available to young students. Saint Francis Xavier in LaGrange, my home parish, celebrates Catholic School 's Week with Student and Teacher Appreciation Days, an Academic Fair emphasizing school curriculum and student projects, and a special liturgy honoring teachers, students, and parents-all of whom make great contributions to the integrity and values of Catholic education.

As we honor Catholic schools we need to especially pay tribute to the more than 163,000 Catholic school teachers nationwide. These dedicated sisters, priests, brothers, and lay teachers are the backbone of Catholic education. They sacrifice so much personally in order to provide a top-notch education that serves our children very well in preparing them for the future. My wife and I are each products of 12 years of Catholic elementary and secondary education. Judy in Johnstown, Pennsylvania at Saint Patrick's grade school and Bishop McCourt High school; myself in Chicago at Saint Symphorosa Grammar School and Saint Ignatius College Prep. Although at the time I did not always appreciate their hard work, I have fond memories of my teachers who provided me with the fundamentals of a good education that laid the groundwork for future academic achievements. But just as important, they instilled in me the belief that I should use my God-given abilities to contribute to society. In doing this they provided me with the inspiration for a career as an educator and as a public servant, just as they have inspired countless other millions of Americans to contribute to our country.

Mr. Speaker, today I strongly urge my colleagues to pass House Resolution 23 and congratulate our nation's Catholic schools, students, parents, and teachers for their ongoing contributions to the future of our nation.

