

Catholic Schools Convocation encourages archdiocesan educators to 'rise above'

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"Joy-filled and passionate."

"Lifelong learner."

"Prayerful and joyous."

"Teaches Christ in all things."

Rather than describe the teachers of the Archdiocese of Baltimore in her words, Dr. Barbara McGraw Edmondson used their peers' words as she spoke at the 2015 Catholic Schools Convocation.

"What characterizes these teachers ... is their charity - their generous love for their students, their colleagues and the apostolate of teaching," Edmondson, superintendent of Catholic schools, said at the Aug. 20 ceremony.

More than 1,500 educators and a few students from across the archdiocese packed Baltimore's Lyric Opera House into the balconies for the kick-off to the 2015-16 school year.

Karen Coyle, who has taught at St. Louis School in Clarksville for 13 years, was one of 12 teachers honored with "teaching excellence" awards.

"I feel very honored that my peers consider me worthy of the award," she said. "I work for wonderful people in a faith-filled community."

Coyle said that the most important things she tries to impart to her first-graders are “a love of learning, believing in themselves and a sense of community.”

“I try to let them know that we are all each other’s keeper, and in the end, God is good,” she said.

Before St. Louis School, Coyle taught in the public school system. As a Catholic school teacher, she said, “there is nothing like teaching God’s word, and the joy of going to school every day.”

Louis Miserendino, another honoree for teaching excellence, has multiple Catholic connections. An Advanced Placement History teacher at Calvert Hall College, his mother, Catherine Miserendino, teaches at Archbishop Curley High School. His great-great-great-uncle, St. Ludovico of Casoria, was canonized in 2014.

Miserendino is clear on his own mission.

“Winning the award was a pleasant surprise, but what’s most important is the impact we have on students,” he said.

While a top score on the AP U.S. History exam is a major goal of the class, Miserendino said that he also wants his students to be able to “understand the cause-and-effect relationships between historic events and their lasting impact on the present situation in the U.S.”

Miserendino is also director of Calvert Hall’s McMullen Scholars Program, offered to “very intellectually advanced” students ready for rigorous coursework and independent research.

“I like being able to get to know students as they discern what it is they’re going to do beyond Calvert Hall,” Miserendino said.

The Doris Musil Award, which honors the late assistant superintendent of archdiocesan schools, went to Sister of St. Joseph Linda Larsen, who recently retired as principal of St. John the Evangelist School in Severna Park.

The convocation included the unveiling of new branding for Catholic schools in the

archdiocese, including a logo that combines elements of the Maryland flag and the archdiocesan seal, and the slogan, "Rise above."

"Rest assured that we'll be stepping up our advertising this fall and into the school year," said James B. Sellinger, archdiocesan chancellor for education.

He put special emphasis on revamping school websites as "an expression of a school's brand and identity."

The convocation devoted considerable focus to the spiritual aspect of archdiocesan schools.

In his homily during the opening Mass, Archbishop William E. Lori noted the many joys of a Catholic education:

"There is joy in discovering and protecting the wonders of creation," he said. "There is joy in unlocking human potential. There is joy in opening the treasury of knowledge and virtue. And there is joy in becoming deeply and personally aware of God's beauty and love for us."

Before she became archdiocesan director of enrollment management, Rachel Harkins Ullmann was both a student and teacher at archdiocesan schools. She told the crowd of educators exactly what she wants for her 6-month-old daughter:

"I want her to fall in love with Jesus Christ, just as I did when I was a junior in high school, sitting in the chapel of Mount de Sales Academy."

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