

Don't stop at Catholic classrooms

I would like to take issue with a statement made by Archbishop O'Brien in "Thoughts on Our Church" (CR, Jan. 27). He wrote, "Those of us close to Catholic education can well attest to the many benefits of our schools, whose graduates: Pray better and more often ..." I have my doubts that it is possible to quantify a person's ability to "pray better." Nevertheless, it seems to me that the archbishop's observation on that point, if true, says less about the benefits of Catholic school and more about the church's deficiencies in the area of religious education.

The New York Times has reported that only about 15 percent of Catholic children in the United States attended Catholic schools in 2009. In the midst of all the attention given to Catholic schools, it is important to remember that the church's mission includes the religious education of all its children, including the 85 percent who do not attend Catholic schools.

If, as the archbishop suggests, the small minority of our children attending Catholic schools really are praying "better and more often," that means we have fallen down on the job when it comes to conveying the importance of prayer to the vast majority of our children. It seems to me that if we fail to provide the highest quality religious education possible to all our children, the church will have something much more important than its school system to worry about.