

# Gospel in classroom

In response to Larry Bonkowski's letter (CR, June 24), I offer three reasons why Catholic sponsored education for non-Catholic kids is important for our Catholic Church: Kristen, Nya and Nyjae. These fourth- and third-graders were baptized in April; all were non-Catholic kids who were attending St. Bernardine's Catholic School. And of course, with them come their families. In addition, there are many thousands of Catholics who understand the broader educational mission of our Catholic Church.

I am sure that Bonkowski's own pastor would have in his homilies articulated the reasons for our vital, life-giving, educational presence. The bulk of the money used to help non-Catholic and Catholic kids alike in our urban schools came from the Partners In Excellence program, money which was contributed by the secular business community, which saw the tremendous value for everyone in promoting and producing well-educated kids whose education was steeped in the teaching of Jesus.

But Bonkowski does bring up a valid challenge: how do we make affordable a Catholic education for both Catholic kids and non-Catholic kids whom we strive to serve? I would suggest that we as church look to putting into place the resources we need to make this happen. I was educated, for example, at a \$10-a-year tuition charge at St. Joseph Monastery, and now in justice and with a tremendous spirit of thanksgiving, I have to give back from my own salary to support Catholic School education. And I do believe that there are literally thousands of Catholic in our archdiocese who understand that.

We as God's People cannot afford to get into an "us vs. them" argument, because if we do, we all lose, and our Catholic Church will be the poorer for it, in every sense. We as a church, reaching out to educate children who are poor and showing them what Jesus' Gospel is about, are doing something that no other church is doing, to our credit and to God's honor and glory. Together, we do something beautiful for God.

*Monsignor Miller is the pastor of St. Bernardine, Baltimore.*