

A Thought on Catholic Education

During the 2006-2007 academic year, a senior student in my Sacraments class raised his hand to ask a question. He said, "Mr. Franzen, what is your pet peeve?" The question was "out of the blue," but I thought that it was worth answering. I said that my answer came from my many years of teaching at Thomas More College and my two years of teaching here at NCC. I also prefaced my answer with the disclaimer that I was not aiming my answer at any student in my presence. My answer went this way: "My pet peeve is seeing students coming to a school like TMC or NCC and not making every effort to get as much as they can get from every minute there." I said that I believed that not making the best of every minute, every opportunity to learn and to grow, was very disrespectful to the person(s) who were paying a large chunk of money to cover the tuition bill and other amenities. (It is also disrespectful to the teachers and administrators as well, but I did not want my answer to be self-serving.) It is also disrespectful to God, who has given each student gifts and talents that must be developed. That is my pet peeve.

The student then asked another question, "Mr. Franzen, why do you care? You are getting paid your salary to teach." It was not a smart alec question. I thought it was a fair question, and my answer was simply, "Because this is a Catholic School." I explained that you can go to other schools in the public realm and many teachers may not care. We here at NCC should care.

I saw the student this past summer and told him that I would always remember him for that question he asked in class. After I reviewed the question and my answer with him, I asked him a rhetorical question, "Do you know why I will always remember you for that question?" Of course he didn't; how could he. I told him that I would always remember our exchange, because now that I had made that statement I would have to do my best to live up to it. I would have to continue to care. The student was happy that he had affected me. I assured him that students have an effect on teachers in many invisible ways.