

## Regina Pacis Academy: Parent testimonial

Good evening, my name is Mary Clare Florentin. My husband Sean and I live here in Stamford with our two children: Carl who is 7 years old, and in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. This is his second year at this wonderful school and Ingrid who is 4, and currently attending Our Lady of Grace preschool here in Stamford. She is also VERY excited to start Kindergarten at her big brother's school next year.

Rather than stand here and tell you about how we came to find this school and our "personal experience" at Regina Pacis Academy, I'd instead like to share with you all a glimpse of the STUDENTS' experience there.

Two phrases you will often hear to describe the school are "**AUTHENTICALLY CATHOLIC**" and "**DISTINCTLY CLASSICAL.**" While these two phrases are beautifully accurate in describing the school, they also beg the question- "What does that mean?" or more specifically, "What does that look like?" Tonight, I'd like to answer those questions by relating to you all a recent experience I had.

On Thursday, October 31<sup>st</sup> the school celebrated the Vigil of All Saints with the children dressed up as their favorite saint and with each giving brief presentation to their classmates and parents. It was such a lovely way to overshadow the now overly commercial and secular nature of All Hallows Eve with this wonderfully sacred tradition of venerating the Saints.

In keeping with the normal weekly schedule, the children also attended Mass at 12:10pm. I went back for Mass that day. The children sat quietly and reverently against the backdrop of the stunningly beautiful Church and the melodious voice of Dr. Samuel Schmitt, who is both a parent of one of our students and the music teacher.

After reading the Gospel, Fr. Ringley gave his homily. However, instead of standing at the pulpit and delivering a lecture, he instead came down from the altar and proceeded to engage the students in...somewhat of a conversation – first asking them, which saint they dressed as and even, to the delight of the children, taking guesses at a few.

Their excitement at "being called upon" was both palpable and endearing. He then proceeded to ask them questions: What does the word Hallow mean? How does one become a saint? How does one enter into the state of grace?

As I watched this, I suddenly realized something. Rather than simply speaking TO them, he was using the Socratic method to extract information FROM them. And for each question he asked, no fewer than 2/3 of the children immediately raised their hands. NOT 2/3 of the upper school, but the ENTIRE school. YES, KINDERGARTENERS- children as young as 4 and 5 years old were actively participating in an academic exercise more commonly reserved for a university setting while also **addressing** a fairly complex **theological concept** such as how does **a soul** enter into the state of grace?

I sat stunned in amazement.

When Fr. Ringley asked: how do we receive grace? Several hands immediately shot up and the first few answers, were actually wrong. And admittedly, the answer I had formulated in my own mind was wrong too. I thought “Holy Spirit.” The answer is: (does anyone know??) THROUGH THE SACRAMENTS.

But the fact that some answers were wrong didn’t matter. Because at Regina Pacis Academy, children are encouraged learn not just from their parents at home, their teachers at school, their peers and classmates BUT ALSO, and most importantly, from their own mistakes.

With the proper guidance, they have to come to the correct answers on their own. By educational norms today, a child would just be told the correct answer to memorize or simply reach for a device, that would (possibly) give them the correct answer, yet also create a false sense of their own intellect along with the erosion of their ability to delay gratification.

In contrast, our students are instead forced to WORK, and to THINK ON THEIR OWN, using what they have been taught and equipped ONLY with the most powerful computer God ever created – THE HUMAN MIND.

Now take this encounter I’ve just told you about and COMPOUND it. Because in the building across **the parking lot from the Church**, that is what’s happening in EVERY classroom, in EVERY grade, EVERY day. PARENTS: REST ASSURED. Our children will be firmly grounded in both their FAITH and their ability to THINK and REASON – fully IN the world, but not OF the world.

It is with great PRIDE and JOY that I have been able to watch these children flourish in the brief period of time that I have been a parent at this school. But beyond that, I have an even deeper sense of GRATITUDE: towards the teachers, the staff, the Board, the clergy and of course my fellow parents. So with that in mind, I’d like to say THANK YOU for your hard work, dedication, support, and for being here tonight.

THANK YOU and God bless you all.