

January 31, 2012

Dear Parents,

Last year our school theme was "Count your blessings. Name them one by one." One of the blessings of Holy Angels is that its parents are passionate about their school. It is this passion that has led many to question the impetus behind changing our school mascot.

The idea for changing the mascot was first proposed at a meeting with the School Improvement Team which is a group of dedicated teachers committed to finding ways to make our school even better than it is. Since this was our 100th year centennial celebration, it seemed a natural time to reflect upon the future direction of our school. It was felt that one simple way to involve the students in this celebration was allowing them to choose a mascot that they felt reflected *their* school. From there the idea was presented to the Principal's Advisory Committee and finally to Msgr. Heinz for approval.

I appreciate the sentiment of tradition. However, we did not become the Trojans until 1972 when the student body voted on their choice for mascot. Prior to that, we were the "green and white" and the "green machine." Our tradition has been to change our mascot periodically.

A Trojan has its origins in Greek mythology which can be argued is a pagan symbol and therefore not a Catholic Christian symbol. In addition, the world has changed a great deal in 40 years. Today if you google the term "Trojan," the first response is a pro-choice product. There is a certain irony that our Catholic school has this as its mascot. I appreciate the sentiment that this forces our children to stand strong against teasing and name-calling. However, whenever our children are subject to rude comments and name-calling, I believe that we ultimately as parents want the name-calling to stop.

I appreciate the monetary concerns raised, but there will be no additional costs incurred with this change. Only the cheerleaders' and soccer teams' uniforms currently have the name of Trojans on them. These uniforms would be replaced during their normal cycle of wear and tear. As for spirit wear, we would discontinue ordering those few items that have Trojans on them. It will be a transition but certainly workable.

I appreciate the sentiment that administration should have something more important to do than to worry about the name of its mascot. On the surface, I agree. However, as the school leader I have been placed in a unique position of authority where it is my responsibility to evaluate our school under the "umbrella of Catholic" (as Deacon White said so eloquently in his homily at the kick off Mass of Catholic Schools Week), and evaluate our mascot against the backdrop of our mission statement in which we are "rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Is today's negative connotation of a Trojan the best reflection of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and our Catholic values? As the school's leader, I can only answer "No." Some of the ideas proposed by our children seem to capture our Catholic values in a much more positive light; for example, Catholic Defenders, Saints, Lords, Sons of Thunder (or Thunder for short), Patriarchs, Eagles, Archangels, and even Knights of God.

Finally, changing our mascot does not diminish its value for the alumni who graduated since 1972. They will always be Trojans.

So I am left with two guiding questions. What did I learn? Where do we go from here? I learned that I must be more vigilant in my efforts to communicate information to parents. I think I have made strides in this area, but there is always room for improvement. I sincerely regret my failure in this area and prayerfully ask that you forgive me for my lack of communication about this change.

As to the mascot change, I need to fine-tune the parameters of the name choice. Our school children are incredibly excited about voting but also need to better understand that their nominations must positively promote our Catholic mission. Therefore, our student vote will not take place during Catholic Schools Week. You will be notified in the very near future as to when this will occur, and this name change will be effective beginning in the 2012-2013 school year.

Again, I regret the miscommunication of information.

In His Service,

Mrs. Forbes