

NEW SCHOOL MERGES RELIGION AND LEARNING



STORY BY
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In the fall of 2007, three young and dynamic Dominican nuns, Sister Maximilian Marie, Sister Mary Michael and Sister Ave Maria, arrived in the Granite Bay area to establish their ministry of educating children in the Catholic faith. Nine months later, on Saturday, May 24, 2008, families from throughout the Sacramento and Placer region attended a ceremony consecrating the founding of a new Catholic School in Granite Bay called Spiritus Sanctus Academy. In addition to Granite Bay and Roseville residents, parents traveled from Natomas, Citrus Heights, Fair Oaks, Loomis and Auburn to attend.

The academy is currently housed at the Lutheran Church of the Resurrection located at 6365 Douglas Blvd. in Granite Bay. When asked about the potential conflict of interest with two religious faiths working at the same

facility, the Dominican Sisters and spokesperson for the Lutheran Church, Diane McCauley, expressed a deep commitment for collaboration to meet a growing need in the Granite Bay community.

"The Sisters offer a religious education to encourage the virtues that lead to a blessed and learned life," McCauley said. "We know that many families in our community are seeking this for their children, so it is a good thing and we are happy to help."

According to the Sisters, Spiritus Sanctus Academy is first geared toward inspiring children to build their faith in God. The fundamental principles of the Catholic doctrine are presented as a nurturing relationship with God as "The Good Shepherd." Sister Maximilian Marie said that their education philosophy instills in the children a distinction between virtue and vice.

"Virtue is demonstrated when we choose 'good.' Vices are habits of choosing what is less good or evil," she said.

According to Sister Maximilian Marie when virtuous behavior is instilled (i.e., kindness, compassion, and honesty), then academic learning can occur with greater success.

Roseville resident Stacey Phillips has enrolled her 4-year-old daughter, Shayla, for the fall kindergarten class.

"We were attracted to the nuns," Phillips said. "Their Catholic orthodoxy is what we want for our children. The sisters have completely devoted their lives to a ministry of educating children, and I

believe their charisma translates to a better academic learning experience built upon faith, love and nurturing."

Rebecca Cutts of Loomis will be sending her daughter Chiara in the fall to the Academy. When asked what attracted her to the school, Cutts replied, "The nuns are so nurturing and grounded in spiritual and character development important for learning. We want that for our children."

Geraldine Anders of Granite Bay said she was looking for a small private Catholic school for her 5-year-old son Hayden. She wanted a school for him where he would receive strong academics and foundation of the Catholic faith.

"The sisters explained to us their wonderful approach of encouraging generosity, compassion and goodwill among the students by praising the children's sincere and honest acts of kindness. We are excited about being part of the Spiritus Sanctus Academy," Anders said.

Father Arnold Ortiz, pastor of St. Joseph Mareello Parish in Granite Bay is also supportive of the new school.

"Anyone that will serve our youth, I will support. And the sisters exude a joy and passion of their faith making them more than qualified to lead the children to experience God's love, and create an ideal environment for learning," Father Arnold said.

— For more information about the education program and enrollment, contact: Sister Maximilian Marie at 899-9187 or reginacaeli@sistersofmary.org.

Sisters Ave Maria, left, Mary Michael and Maximilian Marie recently opened a new Catholic school in Granite Bay called Spiritus Sanctus Academy.

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Sister Maximilian Marie, left, holds Kayleen Hewitt from El Dorado Hills at the new Granite Bay Catholic school. The school held a ceremony consecrating the founding of Spiritus Sanctus Academy.