The Value of Education and Pokémon

By Fr. Glenn McDonald, CSB

Dear Families,

I would like to ask for your help. In the coming months, I will be inviting the students of ECSD to reflect upon what they truly value, particularly when it comes to their education. Allow me to share a brief example that inspired this initiative.

The next time you visit a shopping mall or grocery store, take a moment to look for the Pokémon cards. For those unfamiliar with the phenomenon, Pokémon (short for Pocket Monsters) is a global media franchise created in Japan in 1996. There are over a thousand fantastical creatures, each with unique strengths, weaknesses, and the potential to evolve into stronger forms. The most famous is Pikachu, which resembles a cute yellow rabbit with black-tipped ears and a tail.

You might be asking yourself, "Fr. Glenn, why are you telling us this?" The reason is that when you locate these cards in a store, you will almost certainly find them kept under lock and key. Seeing this always prompts me to ask: do our young people value their education as fiercely as they value Pokémon, Roblox, or PlayStation games? I suspect the honest answer is no.

Please do not misunderstand me—I am not suggesting that video games or trading cards are bad. I loved my Nintendo growing up, and it was a wonderful way to spend time with friends. Rather, I want to find a way to encourage our youth to prize their education with that same level of enthusiasm.

Over the coming months, I plan to explore this theme of values and education through my Little Liturgies program, which many students watch each week. Specifically, I want to introduce them to the concept of a Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP). At its core, an RESP is a tax-free savings account designed to help families prepare for a child's education after high school. To encourage this investment, the government adds 20% to the funds contributed. Additionally, for low-income families, the Federal Government will contribute $500 simply for opening the account.

This is where I need your help. If your child surprises you by asking for an RESP for Christmas this year, could you please assist them in setting one up? In my opinion, the true value of an RESP is not strictly the amount of money saved, but the powerful idea it represents: that education is a treasure worth saving for, and that preparing for a bright and wonderful future is a journey young people can begin right now.

Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP): https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/education/education-savings.html

Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP): https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/topics/registered-disability-savings-plan-rdsp.html