

Mrs. Barkan called me a couple of weeks ago to make an appointment to come by and see me to ask me to do something. We couldn't meet until last week, so I had to wait all week to find out.

I have to admit, I was a little worried about what she was going to ask me to do.

So my imagination started down the road of wondering what was she going to ask me to do? I just knew it was something that was going to be important.

I could just imagine, Mrs. Barkan meeting with Rogo and Mr. Curtolo to ask them for their help to brainstorm on some ideas for what it was she was going to ask me to do...

They talked about putting me on cafeteria duty, but Rogo protested... rightly so.... saying I would probably spend more time eating than I would supervising!

Mr. Curtolo then called Mr. Shuler to see if he could put me to work in the athletics department.

Mr. Shuler went down the list: football assistant? Coach Wright assured him that was not in my skill set.

Basketball? Mr. Nolan and Mr. Ryan gave a flat-out thumbs down to having me on the court. Lacrosse? Cross Country? and on down the list.

Mr. Shuler called Mrs. Curtolo, with a "no go for Father over here."

They ticked down the list of other possibilities and finally Mrs. Barkan declared, "I got it, he is going to start teaching a class." That's it!

So, I imagined she was going to come by my office to tell me to prepare a syllabus, a course description and what subject I wanted to teach so that I could begin immediately.

Of course I would assure her that I would get on it right away. So Superintendent Fedewa, Mrs. Barkan and fellow educators and students, welcome to the first day of my new class. It's a big class and I know a lot of you are nervous about the grade, the tests and the homework.

First of all, I am giving all of you an "A" today. Yup, that's right. You start out with in A in Fr. Daniels class.

Educators, you all get professional development credits for this one.

Good thing Mrs. Hadsell will have to figure out how this will make it onto your transcripts... and not me! There is a final exam, but we will talk about that later.

The class meets weekly.

The good news is that you have multiple options of where and when you get to attend class. Homework is pretty light, but you will have to spend some time reading and studying if you want to pass. Attendance is up to you.

I do not take roll and so it will be on you to decide whether or not you will attend.

The curriculum is pretty easy, I think. The only requisites of this class are:

1. An openness of heart and 2. An imagination. If you have those two things, you can easily pass this class with flying colors.

This class will NOT interfere with your class work at Gibbons and it will not send you home with more homework or worries about passing.

Think about it, no homework and an "A" to start.

It meets every Sunday in multiple settings in Raleigh, Cary, Chapel Hill, Durham, just about every town around us.

You can even take the night course on Saturdays if you want.

The final exam is a good ways off for most of you, though you never know, so you need only be committed to trying your best to pass this class.

Let's go over the requisites!

Openness of heart: Can you see yourself as someone who is made in the likeness and image of a God who is so beyond your greatest imagination?

Can you imagine a God who so loves YOU that this God wants to spend time with you so that you can get to know him better?

In fact, every life God creates, God creates out of PURE love! A love none of us can fully comprehend. It is why we are SO committed to life as a people of God!

This class of mine that Mrs. Barkan has called me to teach, is called: A Life in Christ. And I am not the only instructor of this curriculum.

Every one of you belongs to a parish Church if you are Catholic or non-Catholic alike. Every one of you has a classroom to go to on Sunday to learn each time a little bit more about this God who created us, sustains us, loves us and waits for us.

This God will not force himself upon you and you get to choose to believe in him OR NOT! But, before you decide anything about this God, come to my class and study a bit more about him.

In my three short years here with you all I have come to realize; you are very smart people. All of you.

You would not be in this school if you were not smart people.

Every one of you understands that in order to know whether something is for you or NOT for you, you must first know something about it // before you can decide. That is how it is in my classroom.

You must know something about God before you can decide if you are going to accept or reject God. That is your choice and that is why I think my class is perhaps one of the easiest classes at Gibbons.

The commitment, to get up on Sunday morning and go to class, to learn, to love and to be loved – **that is yours to make**, not mine.

Either way, YOU get to decide how well or how poorly you want to do in my class.

Mrs. Barkan, thank you for the opportunity to teach here at Gibbons... and on this All Catholic Schools Week, I am especially grateful to be counted among the educators in our Diocese. I will admit, I am a little partial to my class since I don't get too many opportunities to have ALL my students and educators together.

The final exam is an interesting one. It comes at the end of life.

It is pretty clear from the course materials that there is indeed a final exam with more than just a grade.

It is a means to achieving a life in Christ **or NOT**. Preparation for the final involves a little effort, sacrifice, a lot of love and an openness of heart.

I don't know if Kobe Bryant or his 13-year-old daughter Gigi woke up this past Sunday morning and thought to themselves this may be the final day of attending class. But they did attend Mass that morning before heading off on that fateful trip to Gigi's basketball game.

You have to wonder if that ever crossed their minds in those final moments of life. They started out their Sunday giving thanks to God, praise to God and blessed by the Body Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus – in the Eucharist readying themselves without even knowing it for their final class.

Kobe's wife spoke out for the first time this morning about his death and said, "I am consoled knowing that he left this world loved by his family and so many fans." Kobe's priest on Monday said, "he left this world knowing how much he was loved by God."

I am not sure that one can have more grace than that if facing death.

May their souls and all those who perished in that terrible crash rest in peace, we pray. So, class, in a few moments you will all be dismissed.

This weekend all of you can find satellite classrooms to continue your course work.

While I cannot promise you great financial or athletic success in this class, I can offer you GREAT academic success – in knowing more about this God who is crazy in love with us.

I may be a bit unreliable in the cafeteria, awkward on the football field and completely lost in the science lab, but I really can help you prepare for your final exam in my classroom.

You just have to come to class. That's all, just show up on Sunday.

Happy All Catholic Schools Week