Indeed. Why would you choose a Catholic School for your son or daughter?

I suppose for some people it is because they seek a set of values for their children. For them to live by, maybe, or at least, to grow up in a school environment where those values are obvious.

And what are those values?
Things like dignity and compassion, fairness or justice, love and respect. Each Catholic School tries to honour these in its culture, its systems, its relationships and its programmes. Sometimes we do these well, and I suppose we must be honest enough to admit there are times of struggle, also.

Others will choose a Catholic School because they are searching for something in their lives. They may not even be religious, but they are spiritual. They have a sense that there is something more to life than what we experience through our senses and our intellect. Maybe they suspect or hope, or just intuit, that a Catholic School may share the same. Sending your child to such a school fulfils that part that is searching or wondering. They hope that what the school offers will be in sympathy with them, and hopefully it is.

For others, it is the sense that the Catholic religion is similar to their own. That is, it is sympathetically similar and therefore able to honour what happens in that family and strengthen the experience within that family. The Church document suitably called “The Catholic School” (1977), reminds us that the Catholic School ‘offers itself to all.”

There is another group who are attracted to a Catholic School and that is those who are Catholic themselves. For them it is a question of real correlation between home and school which is all the more possible in such a place.

There is a tension we sometimes feel as parents between the best moral and formative environment and what we perceive to be the best educational (i.e. academic progress) environment. Remember that Catholic Schools are obligated to be good schools in the same way as any other institution is: “To understand fully the specific mission of the Catholic School it is essential to keep in mind the basic concept of what a school is; that which does not reproduce the characteristic features of a school, cannot be a Catholic School.” (The Catholic School, 1977, p25)

In other words, first and foremost Catholic Schools have to be exemplars of excellence in schooling. We must be good schools. That is our primary obligation. After that has been achieved, then our other benefits will be all the more obvious.

So, people choose Catholic Schools because they are seeking an education informed by a specific value base, a sense of spirituality, respect for the beliefs of others and an explicit religious tradition. They choose it because of some, or all, of the above. They choose it knowing it is a good school and that is stands for something which it is happy to proclaim to all without arrogance or apology.