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High grades for Holy Family

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MANCHESTER – Another year, another national recognition for Holy Family Academy.

The little school that could on Ashland Street has been recognized for the second year in a row for offering one of the nation's best Catholic educations. Catholic High School Honor Roll recently named Holy Family among the top 25 in the country for academic excellence. Just one other school in New England made the list.

Last year, Holy Family was included in the top 50 Catholic schools overall.

The honor roll is a project of the Acton Institute, a nonprofit educational organization that surveys about 1,300 schools nationwide and ranks them on academics, Catholic identity and civic education.

Mary Mosher, Holy Family's executive director, called the distinction "a humbling experience."

"It is always our goal at the academy to form the entire person — morally, spiritually and intellectually," she said. "We are grateful to God for the privilege of being engaged in this work."

The school is home to 73 students, grades 7-12, up from 66 last year, with plans to eventually cap enrollment at 90 in the former Chandler School building. The school will host an open house for admissions Sunday, Nov. 18 at 2 p.m.

Growth has been, by design, slow. That there's been growth at all bucks the trend most other parochial schools are seeing.

"We're kind of beating the odds here," said Mosher

Holy Family combines rigorous academics taught in the Socratic method — examining and questioning text — with the Catholic faith.

"There is a strong vision and a felt need in the community for what we have to offer," said Mosher, "and I know that resonates with families."

A recent fund raiser allowed the school knock down a wall and enlarge the chapel where students begin each school day.

Academics and religion can certainly be separated, said Mosher, but they can also be combined to form a young person's character.

"We're really concerned about the formation aspect of young people — that they become virtuous," she said.

This is the fourth year the Catholic High School Honor Roll has been published. It is produced in consultation with a national advisory board of Catholic college presidents and noted Catholic scholars.

"Not only do these schools deserve to be recognized, but they should also be imitated by all Catholic schools," said the Rev. John Schlegel, an advisory board member and president of Creighton University.

To see a complete list of schools on the Catholic High School Honor Roll, go to www.chshonor.org.