

## Groundbreaking today for Christ the King

**AUSTIN | West Side gets Catholic school**

June 26, 2008

BY **MIKE THOMAS** Religion Reporter [mthomas@suntimes.com](mailto:mthomas@suntimes.com)

Parents, kids and educators will gather this morning with Mayor Daley and Cardinal Francis George at the future site of Christ the King Jesuit College Prep. It will be groundbreaking in more ways than one.

The \$27 million high school, in the 5000 block of West Jackson in the Austin neighborhood on the city's West Side is being built to serve those who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford a private education. [Click to enlarge image](#)



It will be the first new Catholic high school built on the West Side in more than eight decades.

George called Christ the King "a proud moment for the archdiocese."

It will be a proud moment for Shawntel Mables, too. Her 15-year-old son Secquoyah and 13-year-old daughter Shaquocora will be part of Christ the King's inaugural 120-student class.

**Secquoyah and Shaquocora Henderson will be in the first class at Christ the King Jesuit College Prep.**

*(Scott Stewart/Sun-Times)*

"To know that they will be challenged academically, and they will be prepared -- it's an all-around great thing," the Near North Side resident said.

Following a model set forth by Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Pilsen, students at Christ the King -- who will attend classes in temporary space at St. Martin De Porres grammar school on West Washington until their new school is finished sometime in late 2009 -- will work at Chicago-area businesses five days a month to offset around 75 percent of the \$10,000 annual tuition. Companies will pay the school directly.

"This was meant to be a financial model that responded to the problem of inner-city schools not being able to survive and be sustainable," said the Rev. Christopher Devron, the school's president. "But actually, what we found out is this is a tremendous educational model. Our students are, for the first time in their lives, exposed to college-educated careers and to mentors and role models who can really inspire them and give them hope for the future."

Christ the King's chief financial officer, Jack Macnamara, led a yearlong study to look into whether the school would be likely to find success on the West Side. "One of the things I think is true on the West Side is that there's less concern about denomination or sect than there is about religion and God," Macnamara said.

Shawntel Mables is thankful her kids will be steeped in a Christian tradition, no matter that it's different than her own.

"For me, it's an honor to know that the core of their foundation is based upon Jesus, the word of God," she said. "It's an awesome thing for me because they reiterate what I'm already teaching my children."