



FROM THE DESK OF FR. MIKE

If you were to view the Office of Catholic Schools webpage you would find the following article describing Catholic Schools Week: “Catholic Schools Week is the annual celebration of Catholic education in the United States and begins on the last Sunday in January each year. Our schools typically observe this annual celebration week with family Masses, open houses, and other fun activities for students, families, parishioners, and community members. Through these events, schools focus on the value Catholic education provides to young people and its contributions to our Church, our communities, and our nation. Areas of focus during Catholic Schools Week include academic excellence, Catholic identity, and service to the community.”

If you were to spend any amount of time in the Upper Grade Center or the Primary Grade Center of the School of St. Mary (SOSM) this week, you would find students and faculty, administration and families coming together celebrating in any number of ways.

The reason that these celebrations are taking place this week is because of all the effort that has filled the school classrooms since Tuesday, August 22, 2023, when the school year started. The first week of school built on the effort of the first day. The first month built on the effort of the first week. The first trimester built on the effort of the first month. The second and third trimesters of the year will build on the effort of the first trimester.

The support of parent and parishioner volunteers is essential in having a successful academic experience. The members of the School Advisory Committee (SAC), of the Parent’s Association (PA), of the room parents, school volunteers, field trip chaperones, are all integral in supporting the faculty and administration. There are many moving parts each and every day in our parish school. We have, and I am grateful for, the dedicated faculty and administration at the SOSM. We have, and I am grateful for, the many parishioners and school families that are present, help out, and support the efforts all year long at the SOSM.

Members of SAC work directly with the school administration and faculty. Members of PA help raise funds that help fill the gap in the school budget each year. The tuition charged to families does not cover all of the expenses at the SOSM, at both the UGC and PGC. The fundraising is an important and vital part of the school year. The funds raised by parents that support the PA fundraising and the benefactors to the SOSM are key to the continued success at our three-time Blue Ribbon awarded school. May the celebration of Catholic education at the School of St. Mary fill the hearts and spirits of all who participate this week.

Words of thanks and appreciation to the many families and individual parishioners that have supported the 2023 Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA). Due to your generosity, a rebate will be coming to the parish this year. In the coming weeks, the 2024 Annual Catholic Appeal, *Together at the Table*, will be presented to parishioners. I pray that those of you who have not participated in the appeal in previous years will be moved by the Holy Spirit to contribute as you are able. We will pray in the petitions at our weekend Masses in February for the success of the Annual Catholic Appeal, for the ministries the appeal supports, for those whose lives are supported, and for those who contribute. You can follow this link: bit.ly/Appeal2024, to give electronically to the 2024 ACA or bring your pledge envelope to church on Commitment weekend, February 10 and 11.

Saturday, February 3, the Catholic Church celebrates the Feast of St. Blaise. Legend tells us that St. Blaise brought healing to a child that had a bone stuck in their throat and has been associated with the blessings of throats in our Church. You are invited to attend Mass on Saturday, February 3 and have your throat blessed.

The penitential season of Lent is fast approaching. Perhaps you have some palms lying around your house from last Palm Sunday. You are invited and encouraged to bring the old palms to the Parish office or church the next two weekends. The palms received will be burned at a prayer service with our school and Religious Education program students in preparation for the first day of Lent. Ash Wednesday falls on February 14 this year.

On Sunday, February 11, we will offer Mass at 8:00am, 10:00am, and 12:00 Noon – there will not be a 5:00pm Mass that Sunday. Please plan accordingly, to come together at the table of the Lord.

May God bless us in living extraordinary lives of faith in ordinary time,