



FROM THE DESK OF FR. MIKE

This past week there was wonderful enthusiasm and activities in the Primary Grade Center (PGC) and Upper Grade Center (UGC) as students, faculty, administration, and families celebrated Catholic Schools Week. This annual celebration across the United States allows our school to give thanks to God for the many and continual blessings shared with one another. We look forward to continued success this year for all students, while at the same time, preparing for the next academic year.

We have learned over the years that the best advertising for the School of St. Mary (SOSM) is word of mouth. If you know of someone with school age children who are interested in registering at the SOSM, please encourage them to reach out to Mandy Castle, Director of Admissions at (847) 295.4830 or mcastle@schoolofstmary.org. Currently our school enrollment is 428 students, with 168 students at the UGC and 260 students at the PGC. We would love to have even more students and dedicated Catholic families in our school and parish next year.

You will be hearing about and being invited to support the 2024 Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA) of the Archdiocese of Chicago the next several weeks. This weekend is Announcement Weekend. Next weekend is Commitment Weekend and the following weekend is the Follow-up Weekend for the 2024 Annual Catholic Appeal. Many parishioners choose to mail in checks, others give online at www.annualcatholicappeal.com. I invite you to join me and parishioners across the Archdiocese in praying for, as well as making a pledge/gift to, the Annual Catholic Appeal. You can learn more about the ACA at this link: giving.archchicago.org/annual-catholic-appeal/about.

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 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.

Chase Hawkins, the Youth Minister is asking the question: “**Are You Smarter Than Your High Schooler?**” of parents of students in our local high schools. I can assure you that Chase does not want to cause tension among parents and teens. He is not interested in creating animosity in families. What he wants to do is provide a forum for parents and teens to have fun, to socialize with other parents and high schoolers, to learn about upcoming events and opportunities offered through St. Mary’s COR Youth Ministry for high school students in Lent and the summer, and to find out, of course, who will win the game – a student from the class of 2024, 2025, 2026 or 2027 or a parent?

Will they be asked history questions, science, trivia? Hopefully there will be some questions about the Bible and our faith. This Sunday evening, February 4, following the 5:00pm Sunday Mass the question “**Are You Smarter Than Your High Schooler?**” will be answered by teens and parents attending COR.

Next 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.

Mark your calendars for the Lenten Fish Fry on Friday, February 23, from 5:00pm to 8:30pm in the cafeteria of the Upper Grade Center. Please plan on attending. Even more so, order tickets today for the Fish Fry. By ordering tickets today, in advance, the hard-working committee will make sure there will be plenty of fish for you to enjoy at the Fish Fry. Please visit lovestmarys.com/fish-fry to purchase tickets. The vendor for the fish fry has requested that we provide a number of attendees prior to the event. Your pre-registration will assist in making sure the Fish Fry on February 23 will be enjoyed by all. I am looking forward to seeing you there.

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