



August 2024

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome back to another exciting school year as St. Mary School celebrates its 75th anniversary!! I hope this letter finds you well-rested and filled with anticipation for the opportunities that lie ahead. As we embark on this new academic journey together, I am reminded of the unique privilege and responsibility we have as a Catholic school community. Our mission remains steadfast—to *prepare today's students for tomorrow's world in a faith-filled, welcoming Catholic community committed to academic excellence and service*. We applaud your commitment to Catholic education and look forward to working with you throughout the year to promote faith formation, academic excellence, and stewardship. We recognize that in order to be successful in school, our children need support from both the home and school. Together, we can create a positive and enriching experience for all. As partners, we share the responsibility for our children's success and want you to know that we will do our very best to carry out our responsibilities. SMS is a place rich in tradition and heavily invested in faith and family. With the help of faculty, staff, and parents, St. Mary School is a place where children grow as students, in God's love.

We are thrilled to introduce you to the newest members of our teaching staff. We believe that their unique talents and dedication will greatly contribute to our mission of providing a holistic Catholic education to your children.

Mrs. Christy Aponte – 4 year old Preschool – Miss Christy has 16 years of experience teaching at a nearby preschool. She has had the opportunity to meet/talk with the preschool staff before the end of last year and throughout the summer. Miss Christy is committed to creating a faith-filled environment where your children can thrive academically, socially, and spiritually.

Mrs. Melinda Giuliani – K2 (Ms. Kerry DeCosta will be moving to 2A) – Mrs. Giuliani is a recently retired public school teacher with 25 years of experience and is looking forward to welcoming our kindergarten students. Mrs. Giuliani is dedicated to fostering each child's love for learning and helping them grow in their understanding of our Catholic faith.

Miss Mackenzie McNelia – 2B – Miss McNelia is a recent elementary education major graduate from Rowan University and is very excited to guide our 2nd graders as they grow in faith and prepare for the sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion.

Other changes with faculty and staff include - Miss Tiz will be the teacher in PreK 3 five days a week. Miss Elaine will be the aide on Tuesday and Thursday. Ms. Kerry DeCosta is moving to second grade. We welcome Mrs. Tracey Crowthers as aide in 2A and 2B, Mrs. Germain Rahn as our teacher of Spanish, and Mr. Mark Puricelli in Custodial/Maintenance. Our new faculty and staff are eager to meet your children and begin this journey together. They are dedicated to upholding the values of our Catholic faith and providing an education that nurtures both the mind and the spirit. We are confident that their enthusiasm and expertise will have a positive impact on our school community!

Throughout the summer we have been busy preparing for another amazing year. Over the break the

school has been deeply cleaned, several classrooms and hallways have been painted. The gym floor has been painted and new partitions are scheduled to be installed in the boy's bathroom outside of the gym.

Our school year will begin with a staggered schedule. School begins at 8:15AM. Preschool opening information was sent home directly to the preschool families.

Tuesday, September 3	Grades K-4 only	12:15 DISMISSAL – NO LUNCH NO BEFORE/AFTER CARE
Wednesday, September 4	Grades 5-8 only	12:15 DISMISSAL- NO LUNCH NO BEFORE/AFTER CARE
Thursday, September 5	All students	FULL DAY OF SCHOOL – LUNCH, BEFORE/AFTER CARE BEGIN
Friday, September 6	All students	FULL DAY OF SCHOOL

When the students arrive on their first day of school they will report directly to Assumption Hall where their teachers will assemble the classes. The children will participate in a brief prayer service before moving to their classrooms. Parents who drop off their children are invited to stay for the service.

We ask that all parents driving their children to school, follow the car line in the morning and drop the students off as directed by the teachers. As you enter the parking lot during arrival time, you will follow the car line that goes to the 8th grade doors or the one that will allow you to drop off at the gym doors. Please do not get out of your cars when dropping off the children. We have a large number of car riders and we will need to keep the lines moving.

Bus riders will enter through the side gym door. Starting on Thursday, September 5th, all children will report directly to their homeroom when they enter the building. New students and kindergarten students will be escorted to their homeroom.

New parents and parents of children in grades K-3 are asked to place a name badge on your child/children for at least the first week of school. It is helpful to include the bus number or write "Car Line" to avoid confusion at dismissal. For buses, you will receive a bus pass in late August from your school district listing the location and time of pick up. You can expect that the bus will run late the first few weeks of school as the drivers become familiar with the routes. Please be sure that your child carries his/her bus pass in the front pocket of their book bag for teacher or driver reference. Also be sure that your child knows how they are going home each day (bus, car rider, or After Care). **Before School Care and After School Care will not be offered the first two days of school. Both programs will begin on Thursday, September 5th.** After School Care and Before School Care registration forms can be found on our website. You must submit a registration form in order for your child to attend the programs. Due to the continued growth of our After Care Program, it will be held in Marian Hall. Additional information concerning that program will come from Mrs. Schaffer when you register your child. Parents must register a full week in advance before their child(ren) can attend After Care.

Our school nurses will be checking in medication during the first week of school. One of them will be at a table outside the main office door on Carroll Ave. from 8am to 9am the first four days of school. Please bring your completed paperwork and medication order form along with the medication.

For car rider dismissal, grades K and 1 will exit through the gym doors, grades 2, 3, and 4 will exit through the 2nd grade doors and grades 5-8 will exit through the 8th grade doors. When entering the parking lot for dismissal, **it is best to make an immediate left and park in the second or third row of cars.** If you are parked in the first row closest to the church, you will not be able to exit until we are totally finished with dismissal as there will be many students in that area. Please get out of your car and come forward to pick up your child. For the student's safety, your children will remain with the faculty until you walk forward. You are to come to your children, they will not come to you. Unless you are waiting for a sibling to dismiss, please move directly to your cars when your children exit the building. Dismissal is not a time for play; students are not to be running, jumping, playing on the grass or in the parking lot. Cars may exit through the middle driveway of the parking lot as usual. Please note that the third driveway to exit the grounds will be for buses only. The parking area is to be exited immediately after dismissal. For the safety of our students and families, you must follow the correct traffic patterns, drive down the correct lanes, and do not cut through the lanes or the green lines near the exit. We will dismiss a few grades at a time, leaving time in between for cars to move safely out of the lot. Please be patient in the parking lot. Be sure to share dismissal procedures with anyone who might be picking up your child/ren (grandparents, babysitters).

All students will be issued a school Chromebook in the beginning of the year which will be kept in school. Expectations regarding the use of the technology will be sent home to parents from the teachers. Students are responsible for the care and safety of their assigned device.

If your child is absent for any reason, please be sure to call our absence line x250 and let us know the symptoms your child is experiencing. All absent students need to be called out of school for an absence by 9AM. If your child will be late to school, please call the absence line as well. When you arrive late to school, accompany your child to the front door on Carroll Ave. and sign a tardy slip which is in the drop off box located outside of the front door. **As per the handbook, any dismissal changes or absence notes will not be accepted by email.**

Kindergarten Meet and Greet is scheduled for Tuesday, August 27th. Kindergarten parents have been sent a link through email to Sign Up Genius which allows you to choose a time to bring supplies, meet the teacher, and see the classroom. When you arrive, please park in the lot and enter the school through the 2nd grade doors. Someone will be at the door to welcome you. Our staff will then direct you to the correct classroom for your child.

For all other grades on the afternoon of Thursday, August 29th, you will receive a confidential email from Mrs. Morales at mainoffice2@smarys.org with a link to view your child's homeroom teacher. You will click on the link to open up the report that will state the homeroom teacher. If the link does not work properly, you may also copy and paste the link into a web browser. If your email has changed over the summer, please email Mrs. Morales at the address above with your new email address. **Please do not wait until August 29th to let us know of a change of email address as it will be too late for us to get back to you. Email is the only way in which you will receive information regarding placement in class.** Our teachers have spent a great deal of time assessing the classes, personalities, and learning styles of our students in order to create a classroom environment that will, we hope, lead to a wonderful learning experience for your child. Your child's placement has been carefully determined after consideration of these factors. It is a very deliberate process and carefully balanced classroom communities have been created. Please respect the time and energy the teachers have put into the creation of these lists. I look

for your confidence in the placement. Requests for placement are taken into consideration but are not guaranteed. **The homeroom placement will not be changed. Please do not contact the school regarding the changing of homerooms. Placement will not be changed.**

FACTS SIS (RenWeb) is the student information system that we use. Current families can use their username and password from last year. If you do not have your username and/or password from last year you will need to email FACTS SIS (RenWeb). Mrs. Morales does not have access to your username or password. New families can visit the school website and follow the directions on the home page on how to create their username and password. FACTS SIS will be available to all families on the first day of school.

The Student/Parent Handbook has been briefly updated and will soon be on the website. The Student/Parent Commitment form will be sent home during the first weeks of school confirming that you have read the handbook. Just a few reminders.....

- The section on the cafeteria explains our Nutri-Serve Program and how we are a part of the National Lunch Program which enables us to offer free and reduced lunch to those families who qualify. We do not want to jeopardize our participation in the program, so therefore, birthday celebrations must be done through Nutri-Serve only. They have a birthday celebration package that you can purchase to make your child's birthday fun. It is a program that follows the rule in which sugar is not the first ingredient. Treats from parents/guardians are not permitted. Information about birthday celebrations through Nutri-Serve can be found on our website. **We also ask that you do not bring in lunches for your child from outside vendors as this could jeopardize our participation in the National Lunch Program. The application for the participation in the Free and Reduced Lunch School Meals Program is on the home page of our website.** Lunch prices for the 24-25 school year will be \$3.30 for students.
- Cell phones must be off and in school bags. If phones are found on a student and/or used during the school day, parents will need to pick it up from the school office and the child will be issued a detention. SMART watches, fitness monitors and other internet capable wrist devices are not permitted.
- Students are **not** permitted to wear hoodies or crew neck sweatshirts with the school uniform during the school day. Cardigans are optional and available for purchase at Flynn and O'Hara. In addition, we are offering a Navy Blue Embroidered Fleece Jacket (approved to wear with spring and winter school uniforms). Please note: this is in addition to the vest and can be purchased through PTA spirit wear. The PTA is offering gray sweatpants through spirit wear which have been approved for gym uniform. You received an email link to the online store in July. This online store is now closed and will reopen in November.
- School shoes (boys and girls) must be **ALL black**.
- Students in grades 6-8 will receive honors if they earn an 85-96 or high honors if they earn a 97 or above in all major subject areas and maintain satisfactory or above grades in all minor subjects, conduct and effort.

Please refer to the Uniform Policy in the handbook under general appearance regarding haircuts/color (**bleached hair and faded haircuts** are not permitted), hair bows, nail polish, and jewelry. **Boys hair must be above the eyebrow, above the collar and properly groomed. Pony tails and facial hair for boys are not permitted.** Proper dress for the use of a NUT (no uniform today) card is explained in the handbook.

Open back shoes are not permitted on NUT card days. Parents will be asked to bring a change of clothes if students are not in compliance with the policy.

Back to School Nights will be on Wednesday, September 11th (K-4) and Wednesday, September 18th (5-8). More details will be sent home at a later date.

New this school year - We will be serving lunch on most half days when we have a faculty meeting scheduled. Only the main entrée will be available. Snacks will not be offered on those half days. You will see the offerings on the calendar. If not purchasing lunch, please pack one for your child. Snacks will not be sold on half day lunch days.

We are in the process of updating our records and School Messenger, our school notification system. If you or any of your emergency contacts have updated phone numbers or emails that need to be corrected or added to our system, please notify Mrs. DiNunzio as soon as possible at mainoffice@smarys.org.

The safety of our faculty, staff and students is always a priority. We continue to update our security systems, doors, cameras, message boards in the school, access card system etc.... not only in the summer but throughout the school year too.

If you would like to volunteer for lunch monitoring, room parent, library, sports etc.... please contact Mrs. Morales mainoffice2@smarys.org regarding fingerprinting and Virtus training.

We are charging a \$125 technology fee per child which is going towards continuous updating/improving our technology and operating systems for both students and teachers, as well as tools to create safe and engaging learning for all students. This fee also allows for us to have a full time computer/IT teacher on staff. The \$125 fee can be sent to school with your child beginning on the first day of school and is due by September 27, 2024.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this letter, St. Mary School is celebrating 75 years! Part of our celebration will include Crusader Day which will be held on Saturday, October 5th. There will be vendors, crafters and more! That evening we will continue the festivities with a Beef and Beer recognizing anniversary classes and individuals. More details to follow.

Thank you for reading through all of this information! Please do not hesitate to reach out to our faculty or staff with any questions or concerns you may have throughout the year. Together, we can ensure that this school year is filled with growth, achievement, and joy.

As parents/guardians you, along with your children, are a part of our faith community. I encourage you to adjust your schedules so that you are able to attend Saturday evening/Sunday mass. The times for mass at Our Lady of Peace Parish are: Saturday 4:00PM, Sunday 7:45AM, 9:30AM, 11:30AM and 6:00PM. We are confident that the collaborative, innovative, faithful and compassionate spirit of our SMS family will lead us to grow and thrive in this constantly changing world. May God bless each of you abundantly as we begin this new chapter together.

God Bless,

Mrs. Patricia Mancuso