

## **2020-2021 Tuition Policy Frequently Asked Questions**

*This FAQ document is intended to be a quick and transparent reference into many hours of thoughtful discussions that took place at the Finance Council and the School Budget Committee to allow us to equitably set the tuition rates for the 2020-2021 school year.*

*Many School Families have been impacted by COVID 19 beyond and some are hurting financially. In deference to this, we've delayed the tuition process as late as possible this year. We hope this delayed time frame will allow families to recover a bit before making their tuition payment this fall.*

*Please know that I am available to answer any questions that we have not completely addressed with this document at (414) 425-2174 x216 or email [hansend@stmaryhc.org](mailto:hansend@stmaryhc.org). I am a parent of three St. Mary students with two graduates and an 8th grader next year. I can absolutely appreciate your situation and what it has been like to pay tuition and support the parish for the past 13 years and reap the blessings brought to my family by a St. Mary education. I am delighted to work with you and your family on the tuition process.*

*Dan Hansen  
Director of Administrative Services, St. Mary Parish.*

### **Are we changing the tuition policy?**

The policy itself and the expectations of families are not changing. School families have been expected to be active members of the parish, including the stewardship component, for many years. The way we administer the current policy is being changed this year to more justly engage all the families at the school in supporting their parish.

### **Are we freezing tuition? Why?**

Yes, the parishioner-subsidized tuition is being frozen in 2020-2021 at the 2019-2020 rate for parishioners who pledge to the parish. This current level of tuition is in line with what the Finance Council believes appropriate. Their goal is to keep the Parish-subsidized tuition amount in the middle of the pack for our peer group of private Catholic schools. We are neither the highest nor the lowest in this year's tuition peer comparison. Non-Parishioner tuition rates are at the low end of our peer groups' non-parishioner rates.

In order for us to continue providing this amazing private Catholic school experience for your children at an exceptional value, we need to cover a portion of our costs with tuition and fees. The rest of our success depends on a strong parish subsidy. We want everyone to receive the subsidized rate of tuition as registered and engaged parishioners. Going forward, our tuition philosophy will be to seek appropriate annual increases needed to keep us on par with other private Catholic schools. Your financial support and involvement in the parish makes that possible.

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### **What do I need to do to get the lower Parishioner-Subsidized Tuition Rate?**

All registered parish members who fill out a pledge card will receive the lower Parishioner-Subsidized Tuition Rate as reflected on the Tuition Payment Contract. However, our Tuition Policy is not about what we want from you; it is about what we want for you.

We want four things for every school family.

1. We want you to enjoy and grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ and come together as a family once a week at Sunday Mass.
2. We want school families to grow in relationships with one another by participating in the ministries of the parish and the educational, athletic and social activities of the school. This takes time, but it's time well spent. Fundamentally, we're a parish faith community with a school, not two separate communities -- parish or school. We want you to be a full part of the richness of our community, making memories and friendships as your children grow spiritually and academically.
3. We want you to be registered as members of the parish which entitles you to the sacraments and support of the parish that brings you closer to one another and closer to Christ.
4. We want you to have an investment in the parish, to contribute and to make St. Mary your parish home.

### **What if I am already giving to the Parish Operations?**

Thank you! If you are already giving to the Parish Operating Fund, we are grateful. The good news is that your tuition rate is frozen and the good news is that everyone is being expected to help out in the same way you and your family have been. This will also better regulate the rate at which our tuition rates increase over time. The only change for your family might be the additional requirement to formally pledge your support. Pledging helps us budget better and gives us a way to know at the beginning of the school year who will be supporting the parish so everyone shares in the task.

### **What am I expected to give?**

We strongly encourage school families to meet or exceed the suggested minimum donation amount of \$1,000 per year per family. Thirteen years ago when my family started at St. Mary Parish School, I believe the suggested donation was \$750. Although it has risen over the years, it has been at this same \$1,000 level for the past several years. We believe this is a reasonable target. One of our peer parishes averages \$1,300 with almost complete school family participation. Other parishes are similar in their expectations.

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### **What if we cannot afford \$1,000 per year?**

First, we encourage you to break that number down to a monthly contribution. \$1,000 per year comes to only \$83 per month and averages **less than \$3 per day**. As families examine their spending, most folks can easily come up with \$20 per week for the things that they care about. If, however, your family absolutely cannot afford \$83 per month to support your parish, then simply pledge according to your ability in good faith. We will accept all thoughtful pledges.

### **How does pledging work? Why am I pledging through December 30, 2020?**

Pledges can only be made to the Operating Fund. You are free to make additional contributions to any fund or efforts of the parish/school beyond that, but the first pledge is to the operational support of the Parish. It is from this Operating Fund that the parish pays the teachers, school staff and expenses, making up the difference between the cost of your child's education and tuition collected.

Because many people deduct their gifts to the parish for tax purposes, the pledge cycle and giving year follows the calendar year rather than the school year. Parishioners renew their pledges in October and November for the following calendar year. As a parishioner, you will be included in this process and asked to renew your pledge for the 2021 calendar year. So, families who are new to pledging this year are asked for a starting pledge from July to December of 2020. After you renew your pledge for the upcoming calendar year, you would simply check the box for "already pledging" on future Tuition Payment Contracts.

### **Can we still receive a discount for early tuition payment?**

This year the tuition process has been delayed until right before the start of school. Therefore, we are not offering a discount for early payment of tuition.

### **What if I am not a member of the parish?**

We would absolutely love to welcome you into the parish community. The only requirement to join is that one of the parents/guardians needs to be a baptized Catholic. Drop by the Parish Office to register your family. If neither parent/guardian is Catholic (or registered in RCIA to become Catholic), and you already have a student currently registered in the 2019-2020 school year, look below to see about being "grandfathered." If you cannot come to the Parish Office during office hours or we're still closed due to COVID, call me and we'll figure this out. Also, if you are interested in learning more about your Catholic faith, and the Good News of Jesus Christ, a great place to start is by joining one of our Alpha programs. These are a tremendous faith sharing opportunity whether you are Catholic, Christian or Curious.

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### **What if we are not Catholic or we are parishioners at another parish, but our family is already enrolled at St. Mary Parish School?**

We are glad your family is already here and you are absolutely welcome at St. Mary school. We want you to stay! Your children are invited and encouraged to continue with their education through 8th grade and we will “grandfather” your tuition at the parishioner-subsidized rate as long as you have any of your children at the school and fill out an annual pledge card. During that time, we will ask of you only what we ask of our parishioners -- that you make a good faith pledge to the Parish at the same suggested \$1,000 minimum described above. But, please do not be surprised if by the time your youngest child graduates from 8th grade, St. Mary has grown to become your faith community. We are confident in the quality and commitment of our teaching staff and the spiritual life of our parish to influence hearts and spread the Gospel over time.

### **What do we need to do if we are completely new to St. Mary Parish School for the 2020-2021 school year?**

Welcome to St. Mary! Come to the Parish Office, fill out the paperwork to register, and make your pledge. If neither parent/guardian is Catholic, but you are here for the wonderful private Catholic school experience, the non-parishioner rate will apply. This rate is set to be very competitive with what other Catholic schools charge their non-parishioners.