

Dear Friends,

Praised be Jesus Christ!

I know that many of you reading this letter have recently had the experience of taking your child to college. I can only imagine the sense of pride that fills a parent's heart to see their child go off to college. There are so many hopes and dreams. Of course, there is the worry and anxiety wanting to keep them in bubble wrap, safe from anything that can harm them. For other parents and grandparents, your children and grandchildren have returned to school for another year of learning. With "Back to School" in full swing, please be assured of my prayers for all parents who struggle with the emotions of children growing up or leaving home.

For us here at St. Mary we are a couple of weeks into a brand new school year. There are a lot of new faces! Along with our new principal, Mrs. Linda Joyner, I welcome all the new teachers. I can tell there is great excitement in the halls of our school. We are so grateful for the people the Holy Spirit has sent us and we look forward to building bonds with one another, especially through our common bond as members of the Body of Christ. On Wednesday, August 21, Jeff Kacala, our Director of Discipleship, and Linda Joyner led a retreat for all of our employees. It was not just a teacher retreat, or just a parish retreat. This was all of us coming together as a family to pray, learn, and bond. The theme of the retreat was #FollowJesus. As people who work in the Church, no matter the job title, we are called to be followers of Jesus and, in a particular way, to help others do the same. Yes, this is true of every baptized person, however, it is important for us as leaders in our faith community to be renewed in that call.

I know this new school year will be filled with so much joy. Sure, there will be some challenges because that is how life goes. No matter what, we give thanks to God for His boundless love and blessing. We give thanks to Jesus for His constant presence especially in the Most Holy Eucharist. We also give thanks to the Holy Spirit for His wisdom and guidance.

*Gracious God, we come to you at the beginning of this academic year
with our many feelings, expectations, fears and hopes.
Help us to remember, however, we have the comforting
assurance from you: "I will always be with you."*

*Loving God, for all of us this is a time of transition.
It is transition from the work and leisure of summer back to the classroom.
It is transition from time spent with family and friends.
Give us patience with ourselves as we transition as well as patience with one another.
Give us a new perspective to see persons, events, and academic work as an
invitation to develop the many gifts you have given us to be used in service for others.*

*Finally, God, give to each member of St. Mary Parish & School
the seven gifts of the Spirit: wisdom, understanding, right judgment, courage,
knowledge, piety, and awe and wonder.
Amen.*

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Aaron R. Laskiewicz
Pastor