

December 17, 2018



Dear Families,

When St. Mary's School re-opened in 1993, the starting teacher salary was \$14,000. In 2015, when I began my role as principal, the starting salary had only risen to \$19,681. Now, in 2018, our starting salary is \$22,000. Little by little, we have made increases by being prudent with our resources, but we are still not offering just wages to our dedicated and hardworking teachers.

We are addressing the situation through a number of ways. As you know, we have established a Staff Salary Endowment Fund for St. Mary's with an initial goal of raising \$60,000 by the end of 2018. We are getting closer and closer to this goal due to our own fundraising efforts and generous support from our Home and School Association. In addition, the Diocese will gift \$100,000 to this endowment by the end of 2018. The continued goal is to build the fund over time, and as endowments go, access only the interest, while the principal continues to grow to establish a secure, sustainable funding source for teacher salaries.

The endowment is a long term project, however, and our needs are more pressing. Raising tuition is never an easy decision. Over the years, we have strived to keep tuition unchanged or minimally increased. Our School Council, upon reflecting on our starting faculty salary figure, approved a 5% increase in tuition rates for 2019-2020 - all of which will be dedicated to immediate improvement of teacher salaries.

What will this look like for you?

- For parishioners, it is a \$129/year increase for the first child - approx. \$13/month on a 10-month payment plan, or \$10.75/month on a 12-month payment plan.
- For non-parishioners, it is a \$193/year increase for the first child - approx. \$19/month on a 10-month payment plan, or \$16/month on a 12-month payment plan.

Spread out over the year, the increase becomes manageable for individual families; but collectively, it helps move us one step closer to paying our teachers a just wage.

Additionally, it seems there are some questions about the preschool tuition for 2019-2020. The following information should help clarify:

1. Families who in the past have enrolled their preschooler in both morning and afternoon programs paid double the preschool tuition AND had to come to the school to be with their child between the two programs (11:00am-12:00pm). With the new, all day, 4-year-old program starting in 2019, students are at school twice as long, and they will eat lunch with their teacher(s). There will be no break in the program where parents would have to come in to tend to their child, leaving parents to continue with their own work day.
2. The preschool program falls under State of Michigan Child Care rules. The law mandates one adult is present for every 12 children. Staff requirements are higher; therefore, our program expenses are also greater.
3. **Benefit to parents:** the new child care credits are \$2,000 per child. Most importantly, the phase out thresholds are very high: \$200,000 single filer and \$400,000 married. Additionally, and very important as well, the credit is a "refundable credit" meaning even if someone owes no tax they still receive a credit from the IRS. *

Beginning with the 2019-2020 school year, all schools in the Diocese of Marquette will be required to use FACTS Tuition for tuition collection and management; this is a change from our current tuition collection system, SMART. Information regarding FACTS Tuition will be shared with our families early in 2019.

Thursday brings our Christmas Program! It is exciting that it is that time of year once more. We have two programs, 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., each lasting approximately one hour. If it makes sense to have your child(ren) leave with you (or grandparents) at 2:00 p.m., after the first show, please email your child's teacher to let him/her know. Thank you. Once more, a reminder - the after school program will not take place on Thursday or Friday this week.

Friday is a color day. To bring a little holiday cheer, our collection for dressing out of uniform this month is for the local Care Net Pregnancy Center. The center is in need of a new phone system and as a service learning project, Seek-Ye-First asked to dedicate our December color day to this need. As we continue to encourage our students to put others first, while having a bit of fun, students may wear an "ugly" Christmas sweater (or pretty sweater if preferred) and donate toward the phone system. Our usual minimum \$0.25 is required to dress out of uniform, but please feel free to donate a little more. Please see the enclosed flyer. Thank you.

Friday is also early dismissal - 11:00 a.m.

Please find below the Christmas Mass schedule for Holy Name of Mary and St. Joseph's Parishes.

I pray each and every one of you have a blessed Christmas and New Year with family and friends. Have a wonderful break, and we look forward to seeing you again Wednesday, January 2, 2019.

God bless,

Hedy A. Gianni
Principal

Christmas Mass Schedule

Holy Name of Mary Parish

Monday, December 24th

4:00 pm Children's Mass
11:00 pm Midnight Mass

Tuesday, December 25th

10:00 am Christmas Day Mass

St. Joseph Parish

Monday, December 24 Vigil of Christmas

5:00 pm & 10:00 pm

Tuesday, December 25 The Nativity of the Lord

10:00 am

**This is provided for informational purposes only. Consult your tax attorney or accountant to know how the law specifically affects your situation.*