



St. Mary Catholic School

Weekly Update

August 13, 2020

St. Pontianus and Hippolytus, Martyrs

Principal's Update

Dear School Family,

Greetings everyone!

I thought I'd share a little perspective today. We're all focused with the utmost diligence and prudence on the health and safety of our school family, kids and adults, and rightly so.... you're counting on us!

But you're also counting on us to go beyond PHYSICAL health and safety. As a Catholic school, we are focused on the SPIRITUAL well-being of your kids. Outside my office is a plaque that was there before I came. It states:

"Be it known to all who enter here that Christ is the reason for this school. He is the unseen but ever present teacher in its classes. He is the model of its faculty and the inspiration of its students." (author unknown)

What a great reminder for WHY we're really here at St. Mary Catholic School. What an inspiration to strengthen our joy and courage in such a culture of sadness and fear.

As we get closer to starting school in such an amazing time, let's keep COVID away, and fear in its proper place, and let's welcome Christ ever more into our hearts, souls, and minds, looking to Him for the wisdom and virtue that is the goal of Catholic education.

Our Blessed Mother will help us, and this Saturday is the great Solemnity of her Assumption into Heaven. Let's ask our school Patroness, Mary, to help us look to Jesus constantly!

God bless.
Mr. Nicely

Planning Ahead for School

New Website Portal

- We are pleased to offer our SMCS families a one-stop shopping portal on our SMCS website for all our school and Archdiocesan COVID-19 related updates. Click [HERE](#) for our new **Planning Ahead Portal**, and please know that we will be tweaking and refining this portal in the coming days and weeks. Stay tuned for more details from the archdiocesan protocols we received last week.

Orientation Reminder

- Also, be sure to tune in to our ZOOM sessions for parents and students (see the portal for this reminder!).

Special Guest at AoB Principals' Meeting

- The **Director of the CDC, Dr. Robert R. Redfield**, joined our principals' meeting by phone yesterday. As a Catholic and parishioner at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, Dr. Redfield has a special dedication to Catholic education and the Catholic school families in Baltimore. Seeing Catholic schools as part of the "critical infrastructure" of society, he firmly believes that re-opening Catholic schools is in the "best interest of public health." And wanting to "spotlight" the archdiocese, he re-affirmed the "balanced, measured, approach" the Archdiocese of Baltimore is taking to mitigate risk and navigate this evolving landscape "safely and sensibly".

Dr. Redfield also commended our Catholic school teachers who are keeping their joy and commitment to their vocation as Catholic school teachers ahead of the culture of fear.

Dr. Redfield's message inspires renewed confidence as we move forward to August 31st!

First Days of School

- All students in **FIRST Grade through EIGHTH Grade** will begin school on **Monday, August 31st at 7:55am**.
- The **FIRST** day of school will be an **EARLY DISMISSAL** day for all students at 12:00pm.
- The **SECOND** day of school will be a **FULL** day, with dismissal beginning at 2:45 pm.
- Morning arrival and afternoon pick-up times will be **staggered** and the exact schedule will come to you next week. *See below for a message from our Planning Ahead Team*
- Kindergarten students will be following a "staggered" first day of school according to the schedule that Mrs. Barger will be sending you.
- Preschool will begin school on Wednesday, September 2nd.

Arrival and Dismissal

A message from our Planning Ahead Team

- St. Mary Catholic School teachers and staff continue to work toward a safe re-opening of school. In order to do this, arrival and dismissal procedures will be different this year. To safeguard social distancing, arrival and dismissal times will be staggered. Families will be dismissed together to either the Primary or Walnut Lot. ***If you are part of a regular carpool, please email Mrs. Jenny Beck as soon as possible, so we can finalize the times and groups of students:***

jbeck@stmarycatholicsschool.org

We are trying to make this as convenient as possible for parents, so your quick responses are appreciated. More information will be forthcoming regarding the arrival and dismissal procedures/staggered schedule, and we will review this at our Orientation Sessions.

Cleaning and Sanitation

- St. Mary Catholic School is proud to join many archdiocesan schools in our purchase of a state-of-the-art system for disinfecting and sanitizing every surface in our school and playground. This method of disinfecting at the molecular level lasts for several months, and precludes the need for constant chemical treatment of surfaces. All we need to do is maintain our daily cleaning protocols with the new cleaning firm contracted for St. Mary parish. The treatment will be repeated after ninety days. Click [HERE](#) for an introduction to this system which will be implemented before the children arrive.

St. Mary Faculty Team Spirit

- Our St. Mary Faculty and Staff continue to amaze and inspire! You've heard about our Planning Ahead Team (PAT) of six teachers and Nurse Paula Radley, BSN. They have been working hard to sift through all the evolving archdiocesan guidelines and protocols, meeting regularly, and developing plans for all teachers, students, and families. Each one of them is commended for repeated acts of going the extra mile for the school family.
- Today, the St. Mary PAT led a lunch meeting at school (with appropriate distancing) with our SMCS faculty and staff to share plans and guidelines for classrooms, procedures, protocols, etc. Our faculty is an inspiration, clearly dedicated to their vocations as Catholic school teachers. They know that Christ is the REASON for this school and the BEST FRIEND of every child in their care. Bravo teachers!

Student Medications

- Our beloved school nurse, Paula Radley, BSN, has an important reminder: Please **MAKE an APPOINTMENT** by email or phone **BEFORE** the START of SCHOOL to arrange dropping-off medications: pradley@stmarycatholicsschool.org . **NO medications will be accepted if "handed" to Nurse Paula in passing or transferred in a student's backpack.** Thank you in advance!

Visitors and Volunteers

- Visitors will not be allowed into the building.

- However, **PARENT VOLUNTEERS** will be welcome on a rotating system that will be limited to a “**Core Team**” per trimester, with a designated work space to facilitate contact tracing as needed. Click [HERE](#) if you would like to volunteer on site for the first trimester.
- Remember: All volunteers will need to be **VIRTUS** trained and submit to Daily Wellness Screening. Only the designated adult volunteer will be allowed in the school building. Please complete the following form with your availability by Friday, August 20th.
- Volunteer “hours” will be re-evaluated and edited for the new school year. Bear with us as we plan for this!
- **Used Uniforms** will be made available soon. We are working on a smooth, safe procedure for this and will communicate it soon. We apologize for any confusion in this area and ask you to bear with us as we navigate this and so many other new procedures.

Prayer to Mary

The prayer below, “We Fly to Thy Patronage”, is traditionally thought of as the oldest prayer to Mary since the Hail Mary! It is part of the official prayer written by Pope Francis during the Pandemic, and we pray it at all our principals’ meetings. We offer it to all our St. Mary Catholic School families as a special, short family prayer to our school Patroness, asking for her powerful help during this historic time.

“We Fly to Thy Patronage”

We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.