



Dear Families,

As the principal of St. Mary Catholic School, each day I witness the sacrifices made by our students, families, faculty, staff, and generous donors to ensure the vitality of our mission and its impact on the lives of our students. I have a profound appreciation for the financial commitment that we ask you to make to send your child to St. Mary.

As we open *current family* registration next week for the 2021-2022 school year, I want you to know that our Administrative Team, Finance Committee, and School Advisory Council has met numerous times to discuss the budget and next year's cost-per-pupil. The purpose of this letter is to update you about the changes we've made to keep our costs as low as possible--especially during this difficult and unpredictable time--as we develop a budget for the coming year and to highlight some exciting new changes to existing programs.

Our mission continues to be one that actively assists families by fostering community while providing Catholic formation within a strong academic program. We desire that our students be faith-filled Catholics, life-long learners, and responsible community members who act as witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus. Furthermore, it is our mission-driven goal to continue to offer all families the opportunity to attend our Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade program regardless of their financial situation.

Guided by this mission, St. Mary Catholic School, our parish, and many benefactors have supported families that need financial support through our tuition assistance program since the school began. During the 2019-2020 school year, nearly **\$400,000** in total financial support was provided to more than **half** of our families. It is also important to note: **Everyone in our community benefits from some tuition assistance.** At this time, it actually costs over \$7,000 annually to educate a student at St. Mary. Thus, even those paying "full" tuition will receive a significant break per student this coming school year.

It is our goal to continue this important mission and keep St. Mary a viable school for the future. In order to fulfill this mission and manage increases in cost of living expenses, insurance, labor costs, and teacher salaries, we will implement a tuition increase of 5% for the 2021-22 school year.

After reviewing the budget and school operating requirements, we have calculated next year's full tuition at \$6,500. The total cost-per-pupil is \$650/mo (for 10 months). This represents a 5% increase, or \$30 more per month (for 10 months), or \$1.40 more a day (school days), over last year's cost-per-pupil.

As a school, our annual operating costs are supported four main ways: tuition, parish subsidies, foundation subsidies, and fundraising and grants. Our annual fundraising efforts (Annual Drive, Fun Run, Auction, etc.) generate roughly \$150,000 annually to help us cover costs. We are fortunate to have parish support, foundation subsidies, and Nazareth Guild grants that offset some of our expenses as well--allowing us to keep our cost-per-student significantly lower than the National Average of \$12,756 per student and Washington State's \$11,989 per student in public schools. Rest assured, our commitment to you is to offer an outstanding and affordable educational experience with a value that far exceeds the cost.

### **FAMILY MEETINGS:**

As I mentioned in my letter in *The Bell* two weeks ago, in my second year as principal of St. Mary Catholic School, I intend to hold brief (15-20 minutes) registration meetings via phone or zoom with **all** families throughout the months of February, March, and April. This is an opportunity to formally meet if we haven't already, chat about your family experience, discuss the budget, and facilitate your tuition agreement (should you seek assistance) for the 2021-2022 school year. This is a **mandatory** meeting for all families--whether you seek tuition assistance or not.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to sit with each of you in the coming months. I'm supremely confident this will help us build rapport, communicate clearly our respective goals and expectations, and make St. Mary even better moving forward. Thank you ahead of time for your willingness to engage in this important process in a new way! A Google Form meeting scheduler will be sent out on Tuesday, February 16th, so you can sign up for your family registration meeting.

**The Google Registration Re-Enrollment form--must be completed by Tuesday, March 16th even if your meeting with me is after that date.**

### **TUITION ASSISTANCE:**

We will continue to provide tuition assistance to families who are unable to pay the full tuition cost-per-pupil. Tuition assistance also helps families who have experienced a change in financial circumstances, such as an illness or loss of a job, and gives them the ability to keep their children at St. Mary. The tuition assistance program works when we are committed to the education of our children, pledging as much as you can and volunteering as much as you can. Families receiving tuition assistance may be asked to share additional time and talents with the community.

- All current families who request tuition assistance – must first **complete** an online **[FACTS application](https://online.factsmgt.com/signin/4L2TZ)** by **April 16th or by the time of your meeting with me**. Again, the Nazareth Guild will use the results of this application to determine the level of financial support they will provide St. Mary. Families who currently receive tuition assistance need to apply for the 2021-2022 school year. Current families can access their prior Facts application and only need to take a few minutes to update it for next year. **Click:**  
**<https://online.factsmgt.com/signin/4L2TZ>**

### **REGISTRATION FEES:**

Please see the *2021-2022 Registration Fee Schedule* for details. Again, **Registration forms and fees are due no later than Tuesday, March 16th**. It is critical to have an accurate count of students that will be returning for the next school year early so that we can plan class sizes, make necessary staffing changes, and offer teacher contracts accordingly. In light of social distancing and spacing guidelines that may still be in effect, it is vital that we receive this information by this date. Moreover, your enrollment status might be jeopardized if registration is not completed on time.

### **VOLUNTEER HOURS:**

The Volunteer Program is a vital expression of service that builds community in support of the school. While we suspended the 20 volunteer hour requirement last year, we are planning to be back to requiring all families to contribute a minimum of 20 volunteer hours for the 2021-2022 school year. Many of our families volunteer many more hours than required, and it is greatly appreciated. **Uncompleted volunteer hours will be billed at \$20 per uncompleted hour** at the end of the year. Every family is required to log 20 hours in Sign-Up Genius per school year. Look for some more exciting changes to the Volunteer Program in the volunteer flyer you will receive at your meeting with me in the coming months.

### **SCRIP:**

St. Mary is committed to minimizing tuition increases. We strive to accomplish this through finding other ways of funding the cost of providing a quality Catholic education. The SCRIP Program is one such way. Earn money for St. Mary using gift cards for everything you buy – groceries, gas, clothing, restaurants, home improvement ... the list goes on.

**We need ALL families to participate in the SCRIP program. Our school requirement is that each family purchase at least \$500 worth of SCRIP throughout the course of the school year or opt out by paying \$50 to the school.** Think about it this way – we all buy groceries and gas every week/month. By using a SCRIP Gift Card to make these purchases, you earn money for the school without any additional cost to your family.

E-SCRIP is an easy and convenient way to make your SCRIP orders. Scrip gift cards are an awesome donation option to the Advancement office to use for contest prizes or auction items!

### **ENROLLMENT:**

Enrollment is the number one key factor to keeping our tuition costs down. Sadly, many Catholic schools across the Diocese of Spokane have seen a decline in enrollment over the past several years. Fortunately, St. Mary enrollment has remained steady. With the exception of two small classes, numbers are currently stable and growing. In an effort to bolster our enrollment for 2021-22, the Advancement Office is launching an admission campaign to bring 10-15 more students on campus. Look for information about our new Open House in the late spring or summer!

Strategies for increasing enrollment are being executed by the school's Advancement Office and members of the School Advisory Council, but the greatest ambassadors for the recruitment of new students are our *current families*. Each of you are asked to share the great news of what we are doing here at St. Mary and actively recruit new families to the school. Thank you!

### **PK-3/Pk-4 and TK NEWS:**

For the 2021-2022 school year, PK-3 will continue to offer a 2, 3, or 5-day option for families. The 2-day option will be Tuesday/Thursday only. The 3-day option will be Monday/Wednesday/Friday only. PK-4 will continue to offer 3-day or 5-day options for enrollment. The 3-day option will be offered Monday/Wednesday/Friday only. We are excited to offer 9 enrollment spots in the TK Program for next year as well. This new, immersive, full-day PK-4 experience is filling up fast! Like the Kindergarten-8th-grade program, rising expenses, high demand, and additional staffing require an increase in tuition. Once again, our commitment to you is to offer an outstanding and affordable educational experience with a value that far exceeds the cost.

Thank you for all that you do to support our school. In a special way, I would like to thank the current and alumni parents who have helped and advised me, Father Lewis, our Finance Committee, and our School Advisory Council during this process. We pray that each of you, our current families, will help us continue to proclaim the Catholic faith to our students through the ministry and mission of St. Mary Catholic School.

If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me, Fr. Jeff Lewis, or our School Finance Officer, Mrs. Sharon Greany.

In Christ,

Ben Walker