



ST. MICHAEL *the* ARCHANGEL CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL  
KNOW TRUTH | LOVE GOD | SERVE OTHERS

President's Letter - August 2020

Dear Guardian Families,

The following verses from the Epistle of St. James have taken on new meaning for all of us over the past six months: *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.* (Jas 1:2-4) The COVID-19 pandemic has definitely been a worldwide trial, with each of us experiencing it in different ways. Yet, as we have continued to trust God through this time, it will help produce in us the virtue of perseverance, also called patient endurance.

At St. Michael the Archangel Catholic High School, we know the testing - or proof - of our faith involves never losing sight of our Mission to *Know Truth, Love God, and Serve Others as his faithful disciples* in the midst of our challenges. Every decision we make, as we continue our journey, must be made in the light of that Mission. We have a lot going on at SMA right now and I have a lot on which to report.

Over the past two months, we have persevered and prayerfully planned for a successful re-opening of our campus which will take place in just a couple of weeks. This has consumed a lot of our summer, but we are ready and excited for the semester to begin. We have measured and marked for social distancing, established special guidelines for the various activities we have at the school, and we even have an "app" for students to daily report their temperature and COVID symptoms remotely before they arrive at school. I can tell you that our teachers are eager to see the students back in school and in the classroom, offering them an academic experience of excellence. I believe we are ready!

Presently, we will begin the year with 349 students coming to St. Michael, which is an increase over last year. Each year our student population has grown, which is, unfortunately, an opposite trend from most Catholic schools in the U.S.



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This week our teachers have returned and are preparing their classrooms and their hearts for the year to come. It was so good to see everyone again, realizing that we really hadn't been together much since before Spring Break. Wednesday was our Faculty Retreat, a time where we were challenged and encouraged spiritually along with having time to spend with our Lord, letting him refresh us and prepare us for the semester to come. We modeled this year's retreat after *Encounter*, a powerful time of ministry established by a group of our SMA students last year. *Encounter* is an opportunity for worship and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament that is held each month. This is now a part of our SMA mission that we will be continuing as a permanent part of our spiritual ministry.

Unfortunately, due to the various sports and building schedules last school year, we were not able to host *Encounter* at a regular time; it had to be a "movable feast." We are hoping this year will be different and will announce the schedule as soon as possible. This year, when it is safe to do so, we will be extending a broader invitation to alumni, as well as high school students in parishes who do not attend SMA but would like to come. Of course, parents are always welcome!

The afternoon session on our retreat day focused on Community, which is the heartbeat of our school and one of our primary means to enact the spiritual dimension of our mission, which is high priority. There is much to celebrate about St. Michael as a wonderful place for our students spiritually, and Community is a big part of that. With this approach to student life, our young men and women are able to grow in faith, develop their leadership skills, and grow together as brothers and sisters in Christ as members of one of our three communities.

Following each semester retreat, Faculty Faith Formation provides the faculty and staff with a weekly opportunity for continuing spiritual growth and discipleship. I am particularly excited that we will be partnering with Holy Family School of Faith, who will be working with us on resources and content for this important ministry. Faculty formation here at the school is led by myself and Mr. Kyle Sellnow, one of our theology teachers, along with six small group leaders. We are looking forward to a wonderful year of growth and strengthening in our relationship with the Lord.



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In that vein, please join me in welcoming back Fr. Alex Kreidler as our chaplain at St. Michael this year. You may remember that he was the chaplain our first year in addition to teaching Latin. I am really excited about working with Fr. Kreidler again this year. He will offer Mass on Mondays and Fridays. In addition, on Friday mornings he will be with us for Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Confession and just being with the students. He will also be joining us at other times during the week, as time allows, and is very excited about the coming year.

As we all know, this has become a very different world since the outbreak of COVID-19 in the United States. I can still remember the frustration we had early last Spring in canceling our trip to Italy due to the coronavirus overseas. At that time I never thought that it would become the worldwide pandemic that it has become. Early on, many of us thought that the crisis would be over by mid-summer.

With the extension of the directives for re-opening, at SMA we knew that opening the school for face-to-face learning would be a huge challenge but one we were willing to accept. I want to thank Jodi Briggs for her commitment and drive to not only see our students return, but to do so with safety and security as the highest priority. She, along with her team, put together a comprehensive strategy that quickly received approval from the diocese to move forward. Jodi will be sending out a more detailed plan in her upcoming Principal's letter.

We also put together a Re-opening Task Force to dive deeper into the weeds of getting our building safe and ready. With the help of Rob Ellis and City Wide Maintenance, we have been able to put together the procedures and equipment needed to address the challenges we face. Rob also serves on our task force and has been an amazing resource for us.

On a personal note, some people have inquired about my work situation as I am in the high risk category with regard to the pandemic. As someone over 70 years of age who is in good health with a history of chronic bronchial issues, there is a need to monitor how I will be spending my time this year. I am carefully observing how to maximize my time at school while minimizing any possible exposure.



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As you can see, we have had a very busy summer. Added to everything else we've been doing, we had a wonderful event take place at the end of July - our Guardian Golf Classic. Stacy Needels, Mary Kroening and Bob Glasgow did an amazing job, along with their great committee, in making this an enjoyable day of golf, fellowship and fun. We had 44 teams participate at Lakewood Oaks Golf Club. We started in the rain, which soon went away, leaving cloudy skies and milder temperatures. We were able to raise a record amount of over \$25,000. Again, a big thank you to the Golf Task Force

At the close of my letter, it is my pleasure to announce that Lamar Hunt, Jr. of the Loretto Foundation, owner of the Mavericks and member of the founding family of the KC Chiefs, has been elected as the new Chair for the SMA Board of Trustees. Lisa Ginter, CEO of CommunityAmerica Credit Union, has been elected as the Vice-Chair. They join our secretary, Nancy Bass of Dynamic Displays, and our treasurer, Blake Asjes, Director of Finance at Netsmart, on the Board's Executive Committee.

I also want to extend a huge thank you to Judge Tom Gordon, our outgoing Chair, and Mark Reiger, our outgoing Vice-Chair, for three years of dynamic leadership during the opening years of St. Michael. They both have logged many hours on behalf of our school during our "shakedown cruise" and will continue to do so as they both are remaining on our board.

This has been a long letter. Thank you for staying with me to the end! I am excited for this coming year and all that it has to offer to our students. Please continue to pray for all of us, faculty, staff and student body, that this will be a year, as St. Luke says of Jesus, where we will grow *in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.*

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Randy Sly