



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

CATHOLIC PARISH & SCHOOL

October 11, 2016

Dear Parents, Guardians and Friends of SVdP School,

I have greatly enjoyed getting to know so many of you through our morning coffees by grade level. I have just finished meeting with each grade level, and although I realize not everyone was able to make the times/dates that were scheduled, I did meet with a good representation from each grade level. There were three common, cross-grade-level concerns for which parents asked explanations and/or vision for the future, and I would like to address them here so that everyone who may have had similar questions has equal advantage to understanding the explanations. The three issues were Sacramental Preparation (briefly addressed in a Fast Direct this past Saturday), Latin and foreign language, and Halloween 2016.

Sacramental Preparation

First, and most importantly, our sacramental preparation program is taking firm shape. I am so pleased to introduce to you Kelly Archer, who will be handling the sacramental preparation for Saint Vincent de Paul Parish and School. Kelly is currently finishing her Master's in Theology at the Augustine Institute. Prior to beginning these master's studies, she volunteered with Christ in the City deepening her call to live out the Gospel. This experience will be a wonderful asset to our sacramental prep program.

The first Confirmation meeting will be held on Tuesday October 25, 2016 from 6:30-8:00 pm in the cafeteria, and is for parents only. If you do not register in advance, you will have an opportunity to register on that evening. During this meeting, Kelly will provide a timeline of meetings for the year as well as explain the role of the school, the parish, and the family. Catholic students in grades five and six at SVdP School will constitute the largest group of children being confirmed. However, families who have older children or younger (down to third grade), or whose children do not attend SVdP School, may opt to have their children confirmed. Kelly will explain the preparation process for these families as well.

Meetings for parents who have children in second grade receiving First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion will begin in January 2017. Students are being prepared in the classroom throughout the year, but immediate preparation with families will begin in the new year.

Parents, in the meantime, never underestimate the preparation you can do in your homes on a daily basis. Daily family life is replete with opportunity to live the Christian life deeply and is an excellent and necessary preparation for receiving Confirmation, First Reconciliation or First Holy Communion. Some ideas follow:

- Attend Mass weekly (as a family when possible) on Saturday evening or on Sunday
- Prepare the readings in advance by reading them as a family (especially the Gospel), talking about them, meditating on them, and resolving to live one particular aspect of your Christian life better in the coming week
- Talk often about the freedom we have to make choices and how we used that freedom throughout the day. Our Christian life is one of great power and freedom – and, as Spiderman knows, also great responsibility! What habits are our children building by the free choices they make each day?
- Establish time and space in your family to talk with one another candidly, asking and offering forgiveness and being mindful of living in a community, making personal sacrifices for the common good.
- Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are the sacraments of initiation into the fullness of the Christian life. Living out our baptismal and confirmation graces well means that we are attuned to the subtle guidance of the Holy Spirit. God absolutely has a plan for our children's lives. Cooperating with this plan requires listening, praying, making good choices, and living in a strong Christian community like your family, like our parish, like our school. Children should learn obedience from wise, prudent, and fair parents. When children learn obedience on a natural level, and when parents are wise and fair, children are very well prepared to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit who becomes a strong guide for them in the sacrament of Confirmation and for the duration of their Christian lives.

Latin and Foreign Language

Over the summer I sent out a letter asking for parent input with regard to including Latin in the SVdP curriculum, but received no feedback. This is not terribly unreasonable as families are entitled to their summer break! However, having arrived at SVdP with no satisfactory language program in place I did due diligence to understand the complaints, the needs, the expectations of students and families with regard to teaching a language. As was explained in the summer letter, and at Back to School Nights, Latin is an academic language which, after being absent from modern education for a few decades, is now making a definitive comeback across the country. It is well known that not only the English language, but all the romance languages find the majority of their roots in Latin. In addition to language and the humanities, science and medicine draw heavily on Latin roots and prefixes for their vocabulary. Additionally, historical data shows that those who major in classical languages (Latin and Greek) have scored in the number one position on the GRE exams every single year, without fail, for several decades. In second position on the GRE rankings are graduates of classical studies/culture. Perhaps SVdP's foremost reputation is its high academic caliber, and so when I arrived this summer, Latin seemed an obvious enhancement when selecting a base language.

However, I also understand that our students would greatly benefit from a strong Spanish program, which we are exploring this year. Part of the dissatisfaction with the SVdP Spanish program over the past years is that students were leaving 8th grade with insufficient knowledge of the Spanish language, even after having Spanish class weekly for nine years. We all know that language is best learned in an immersion experience. This does not seem a likely possibility at SVdP in the next several years. However, it may be possible to include Spanish on a daily basis in the upper grades, affording our graduates the opportunity to enter high school at the Spanish II level and at least have some conversational abilities in the language. Adding Spanish in this way would necessarily require taking time away from other classes, so it is something that requires diligent thought, research, and planning if we add Spanish.

Halloween 2016

I have come to understand that this issue is partly about Halloween and partly about trying to understand whether or how much things will change at SVdP under new leadership. I have been very edified and grateful that, while this specific decision is disappointing to a number of you and your families, you have been very supportive and understanding and willing to move forward together this year.

As I told many of you at the "coffees," I would not have considered Halloween much before October 30th except that I was asked what we will be doing this year for Halloween. As with nearly all things, I asked "what do we normally do" for Halloween at SVdP? Answers varied from parades to parties to emphasis on Halloween to emphasis on saints or storybook characters. The vision was not clear, so in making a determination I thought it appropriate at a Catholic school to emphasize November 1st – All Saints – a Catholic Holy Day, so that is the day of our parties, and the option of dressing up as a saint and being involved in the Mass procession. However, understanding that there was some type of Halloween celebration, I allowed for some accessorizing to make Halloween festive as well. To clarify, October 31st is a jeans dress down day for students who wish to participate. They can dress in themed socks or accessories, including a part of a costume such as a cape for our superheroes or tiara for our princesses, or other similar attire. Students should avoid bringing or wearing anything that would be excessive distraction in the classroom. As in the past, there is no room for blood, guts, gore, weapons, etc. Students in the 6th grade will participate in their service program at the Mullen House on that day, and will be permitted to change into their costumes before leaving for that field trip.

And finally, please pray for our 7th and 8th grade students who are on retreat this week. This is a special time for them to leave behind the daily schedule and obligations and be free to renew their dedication to following Christ. Typically, a class retreat also cultivates strong social bonds that help the students to support one another throughout the rest of the year. Please pray for these special graces for our middle school students.

Sincerely in Christ,

Sister Dominic, O.P.

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Principal

New Announcements

- Parent Teacher Conferences: The Parent Teacher Conference schedule was sent home in student folders today; please check your child's backpack for your scheduled conference time. Conferences were scheduled in a way that allows for families with multiple children to have most conferences back-to-back. Please make every effort to use the conference time assigned; however, if your family has an irreconcilable conflict, please contact the teacher for an alternative date to meet.

- Rosary Club is Beginning:
 - o The Rosary Club is open to students in 2nd – 8th grades.
 - o Meets 1st & 3rd Mondays after school in the conference room, beginning Oct 17th
 - o Contact Therese Andersen at boatric@sbcglobal.net or 303-963-5768
 - o Space is limited so sign up soon

- Mom's Prayer Group: Parish and School Moms
 - o Mark your calendars for time to come and pray for your family and for our parish and school.
 - Thursday November 17th in the Church
 - Thursday, December 1st in the Church
 - Followed by fellowship in the cry room for those who wish to stay
 - Contact Cathleen Gilles at 415-613-8493 or through FD for more information

- The Jubilate Youth Choir and the Hand Bell Choir did such a nice job leading the music at the 11:30 mass last weekend!
 - o The next time they will be singing/playing is November 6th. There are still openings in both Choirs. The Jubilate Youth Choir rehearse Thursday's at 3:45 and the Hand Bell Choir Sunday's at 1pm. Please contact Mary Beth Church at the parish office if you need further information. #303-744-6119 ext 222.

- Volunteer Help: Campbell's Soup Labels
 - o Are you looking for a fun, easy, and quick way to help out the school? Well, look no further. All it takes is about a minute a day at your computer – no cutting, no selling, no money, just typing and a click and you are done. Here is what you do:
 - o Stop cutting Campbell's soup labels – they are discontinuing the program
 - o Go to www.grandstandforschools.com/en-us/dashboard once a day per email
 - o Enter SVdP's zip code (80210) and the school name

The school could win the grand prize of \$1,000,000 or \$10,000.

Anyone who goes to the website has the opportunity to win a personal prize of \$175 Visa Card each day. Spread the word. The more clicks, the better our chances for the grand prize.

Noteworthy Dates

October 15 th :	<u>Golf Tournament</u>
November 3 rd -4 th :	<u>Parent Teacher Conferences</u>
November 17	Moms Holy Hour – SVdP Church