



## ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

CATHOLIC PARISH & SCHOOL

July 15, 2016

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Friends of St. Vincent de Paul Catholic School,

Happy summer months. I hope these first weeks of summer have afforded you a relaxed pace in your home with extra time for rest, late-rising mornings, a few lazy days at the pool and some vacation time, complete with summer reading in hand! The summers seem to go more quickly than when I was a kid in school, so I pray you will enjoy each day with your children.

As the summer weeks pass by very quickly, I am gaining excitement to join you in Denver in early August. In my two quick trips to Denver in May and June this spring, what I experienced is a phenomenal parish and school team with united efforts to develop our children's intellectual, moral, spiritual, and physical lives at St. Vincent's. During my short time there it was evident to me that this place has a long, special, and beloved history. Families are proud to belong to this parish and to this school, and what a gift it is to me to join all of you in taking leadership of the school. I have great hopes for what God will do for us in the weeks, months, and years ahead.

First I would like to introduce to you the spiritual theme for the year, derived from Saint Paul's letter to the Colossians: *Fix your thoughts on things above* (Col 3:2). Saint Paul teaches us that we have both the freedom and the power to "fix" our thoughts, and he exhorts us to fix them on "things above." But just the knowledge that we have this freedom and power to direct our thoughts is extraordinarily helpful in the formation of children (and adults!), and especially so in the learning environment. It is the task of parents and educators together to expose the child's mind to those things that will direct it and form it rightly both for their citizenship here in this world and citizenship in heaven. This is an increasingly challenging task in today's culture, and one we want to be very intentional about. This simple scriptural phrase is filled with at least a year's worth of meditations and thoughts, and I hope to share more with you as the year progresses. Along with this scriptural theme, we will continue the Virtues in Practice (ViP) Program. Each month at St. Vincent's the students, faculty and staff will be learning about a virtue and working to cultivate it in our lives through prayer and practice. I hope this school-wide program will unite us as a community and open our hearts to God's transforming love.

Another letter will follow this one in early August which will have detailed information, calendar, forms for the school year, etc., but I wanted to send this quick greeting to you before going into retreat next week, and also to share with you some items of interest. The following is simply for your information:

- No changes to the uniform policy this year!
- Saint Vincent's has been upgrading security over the past year or so all over campus. To this end all building-access doors are locked when school is in session. Additionally, security cameras are located at entrances and in various hallways for safety of children and faculty/staff. Safety remains an ongoing priority on the campus.
- Resulting from Heather Grams' parent survey and focus group at the end of last year, a parent committee is helping to develop a school-wide service program called "SVdP Serves" giving each grade level age appropriate, hands-on service opportunities to strengthen Christian formation and to serve the needs of those around us. More to come on this before it kicks off on our patron's feast day, September 27<sup>th</sup>.
- Community Cleanup Day is August 13<sup>th</sup>. Please contact Joey Satkowski, Facilities Manager at 303-744-6119 x206 if you are able and willing to help. It is from 8:30-noon. Thanks for helping to beautify the grounds!
- We welcome Mrs. Mary Cohen as Assistant Principal this year. While transition of leadership can cause some anxiety and confusion, I believe we are very well positioned in the area of leadership for this year. Mrs. Cohen has a long history in the Archdiocese including teaching at Saint Vincent's, serving as principal at St. Mary's of Littleton, serving in the Archdiocese for five years in the role of Assistant Superintendent, and now returning to

Saint Vincent's where she can work on a daily basis in forming children, strengthening the academic program, and forwarding the mission of Catholic education. Her knowledge of Denver Catholic Schools and the Archdiocese will be a significant help in ensuring a smooth transition.

- Following are faculty positions for the coming year:
  - PK Sheri Jeske supported by Erika Diaz
  - K Alexie Salazar supported by Mariela Casper  
Amanda Ross supported by Mary Ellen Lowrey
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Sue Gerken and Deshaunne Kurulak  
Deb Mellentine – Reading Specialist push in for grades 1-3; assist grade 1
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Sister Marie Dominique and Ann McPherson  
Kristi Kloene – Reading Specialist push in for grades 1-3
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Shannon Yoder and Mary Donelson
  - 4<sup>th</sup> Megan McGillicuddy and Tara Barnes
  - 5<sup>th</sup> Sheri Andersen\* and Emily DeLisle
  - 6<sup>th</sup> Samantha Merrion and Mary Papich
  - 7<sup>th</sup> Becky Brown and Sarah Sullivan
  - 8<sup>th</sup> Beth McConaty and Sister Marie Therese

\*Sheri Andersen will remain full time in the fifth grade classroom

- Specialty Faculty:
  - Art Several applicants in process – please pray for the right candidate
  - Music Lisa Phillips
  - PE Scott Dirrane
  - Computers Jane Bancroft
  - Language\* Several applicants – please pray for the right candidate/s
  - School Counselor Tracy Dirrane
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Please note that I realize we do not currently have the right plan for a librarian next year. However, between the joy of “story time” in the lower grades and the importance of research skills in the upper grades, this position is a priority for our school and will be addressed.

Note: we are *exploring* the opportunity to include Latin in our program next year with Latin being taught weekly in grades 1-7 and then the *option* in 8<sup>th</sup> grade of continuing with weekly Latin along with other specials, OR foregoing specials in 8<sup>th</sup> grade in favor of daily Spanish. Following are some of the supporting ideas for this language program:

- Latin is renowned for its ability to develop analytical and critical thinking which transfers to contemporary educational goals especially in the areas of science and technology, but obviously also in the disciplines of language, comprehension and vocabulary
- Studies are fairly unanimous that the highest scores on GREs for both language and math are by students who majored in classics or classical languages
- Weekly exposure in grades 1-7 does not/should not come with the expectation of achieving a working knowledge (i.e., speaking/writing) of a modern language, as has been tried with the Spanish program. It may seem like a language program is failing when actually the expectations were simply unclear. Therefore, there is no expectation that exposure to Latin would allow students to speak it as though it were a modern language used in the city of Denver. Rather, the expectation is that it actually forms and develops the thinking mind and lays a strong foundation for the grammar of language as well as vocabulary for all other disciplines to be studied.
- Offering the option for daily Spanish in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade affords the greatest opportunity of students graduating from SVdP with a working knowledge of a modern language
- I welcome your feedback on this and also hope to attract 2-3 volunteer parents willing to serve on a short focus group beginning in late July/early August.

- Following are individuals serving on the parent leadership boards this year:
  - o Home and School
    - Heather Bacon (chair)
    - Julie Buckley (past chair)
    - Kate Ennis (vice chair)
    - Jenae Neiman & Kay Watson (Faith and Family Subcommittee)
    - Leeza Solano (Health/Wellness Subcommittee)
    - Sarah McGuire (Communications Subcommittee)
    - Carissa Money (Fundraising Subcommittee)
  - o School Advisory Council
    - Denise Whittington (Policy Subcommittee)
    - Michael Guy (Technology Subcommittee)
    - Sarah Riopelle (Communications Subcommittee)
    - Joe Powers (Facilities Subcommittee)
    - Kari Thiessen (Finance Subcommittee)
    - Marc Bradac (Parish Finance Council liaison)

Dear parents and families, I intended for this to be a one-pager. Thank you for your patience in reading through the letter at your leisure. I am so excited to come to Denver to meet you and to work with you in the education of our children. May God bless each of you and let us pray for one another for safety, unity in our community, and depth of holiness in our families.

With prayers for your families,

*Sister Dominic, O.P.*

Sister Dominic  
Principal