



St. Francis of Assisi

CATHOLIC SCHOOL

MUSTANG CONNECTION

ALUMNI AND FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

Winter 2014

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Welcome To The Islands

As we look outside at the snow and thermometer readings with record breaking cold temperatures, we "Welcome you to the Islands" and invite you to join us for the 13th Annual Educational Trust Fund (ETF) Benefit on **February 22, 2014**, at the Sheraton Ann Arbor Hotel. The event promises to be a fun, friendly, warm, and entertaining evening!

The ETF Benefit will include many special features this year. **Mark Grum** and **Ryan Wawrzaszek**, both fine alums of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School, will perform with the University of Michigan Friars! This vocal group, also known as the "Great Eight," will delight you with their a cappella music and fun antics. Also, as Master and Mistress of Ceremonies, we have **Tim and Shann Patton** to guide us through the evening. After 25 continuous years of having children enrolled at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School, their youngest son is now completing eighth grade.

In addition to live entertainment by the University of Michigan Friars, the ETF Benefit will include a delicious strolling dinner, an open bar, charitable games, and both a silent and live auction. A few auction items include a specially prepared dinner with Pastor Father James Conlon, a week in Maui, dinner and a movie for one entire class at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School, and University of Michigan 2014 season football tickets. To see a more extensive list of our "One-of-a-Kind Treasures" auction items or to make an online reservation or donation, visit www.stfrancisa2.com/etf/. You can also call the Development Office at 734.821.2208 for information on the Benefit.

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School has been blessed with forward thinking parishioners, alumni and supporters. In 1987, these visionaries created the ETF, our school's permanent endowment, to help provide for our students a quality Catholic education despite rising costs. While the ETF Benefit is a fun and exciting event, its primary purpose is to build the endowment to support many critical needs.

Our physical facilities are expensive to build and maintain. The quality of courses and teaching is subject to close review by local, state, and accrediting agencies. Excellent faculty and administrators are essential to attract and retain. Good public schools compete actively with ours for our students, especially in the higher grades. Along with these pressures there is the growing emphasis on materialism and secular values in the world around us, and the resulting decline of religion among today's family priorities. These circumstances test our resolve to develop a strong and lasting identification with the Catholic faith in our children.

The Educational Trust Fund Benefit gives us all the opportunity to help secure affordable Catholic education within our community. Please join us in this important work and plan now to attend the Educational Trust Fund Benefit on Saturday, February 22 at 6:00 p.m. at the Sheraton, on Boardwalk in Ann Arbor, in your best tropical attire!

Patrick and LeeAnn McKeon
ETF Benefit Chairs and Proud Parents of Donovan, Grade 2



Philosophy and Mission Statement

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School is a family-oriented mission of the St. Francis of Assisi Parish community where each student is valued, respected and nurtured as a unique creation of God. We challenge our students spiritually, academically and physically to learn, care and lead as they work to discover the plan that God intends for them. As followers of Christ, we strive always to instill in our students the words of St. Francis of Assisi... "Preach the Gospel always, and when necessary, use words."

The Pastor's Perspective



Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! Several months have passed since I returned to St. Francis of Assisi Parish as your new Pastor. As I write this, I know time has flown by since the weather on that memorable day was 80 degrees higher than it is today! Now, in these cold winter months, I am blessed by the warmth and ever-flowing goodness of your joyful and generous hearts.

I am sincerely grateful to belong to this vibrant and faith-filled community. I also look forward to living each day with the Lord, with you. Let us bring glory to God through our spiritual journey together.

As a community of faith, we are all truly blessed by the wide variety of opportunities to witness our Catholic faith. In this New Year, please consider joining us for some prayerful time during our weekly adoration. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Thursdays, following the 9:15 a.m. Mass, in the main church. Among many prayers, the holy hour includes prayers for our school families and for God's blessing on our school.

Adoration is a restorative and grace-filled gift. It is an opportunity for God to enlighten our hearts and guide our steps with the light of His spirit. Spend time with the Lord and be blessed by His loving presence.

Finally, as a holy member of our school family, I invite you to invest in Catholic education at St. Francis of Assisi. I encourage you to support our Annual Appeal if you have yet to do so.

Annual Appeal proceeds help us bridge the gap between tuition charged and the actual cost of educating each student. (The variance, based on this year's budget, totals \$2,600 per pupil.) Please contribute what you can for the love of God and our students.

May this New Year nourish your spiritual life and help you reveal God's love and grace to the people you encounter.

Blessings,

Rev. Fr. James Conlon



May the smile of God light you to glory.

~ An Irish Blessing ~

From the Principal's Pen



Greetings!

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School is off to a great start this 2013-2014 school year. While enrollment is always a challenge, we are blessed to have exceptional class sizes and yet still operate in the faith-based, excellent education tradition St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School has established.

This fall we were blessed with the addition of new family members to our staff team. Their biographies and information are available through our website, at:

<http://www.stfrancis2.com/school-community/about-sc/meet-our-staff>.

Please join me in welcoming:

Katherine Pfeiffer - Media Specialist

Sarah Stern - Grade 4 Math/Science- 4A

Megan Gainey - Grades 7/8 Literature & Grade 8 Religion

May Butsic - Grades K-5 Spanish

October brought many exciting days to our school. We celebrated the Feast of St. Francis with an afternoon jog-a-thon hosted by the Parent Teacher Group (PTG) to help raise money for tablet education at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School. We were also blessed with a wonderful Grandparents' and Special Friends' Day. Our school was bustling with our loved ones, new, and old friends. It is always so rewarding to me to see how many truly value Catholic education and who help form our little people. St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School is truly more than a school but a family.

One special moment this fall was on November 22nd when one of our dear 2nd graders, Alden Grob, was baptized. We had an all school mass and were blessed to share in his special sacrament as a school community.

We wrapped up our fall/winter season with our beautiful Christmas program. Each year I am so honored to see the many talents God has blessed our students. It truly brings me to tears as we celebrate our Savior's birth.

As the winter months are upon us, I wish you many days filled with warmth, safety, health, and joy. May you relish in the beauty God shares with us through the time with family and through our remarkable world around us. St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School is such a loving and caring community. Every day I am grateful for each of you as a part of our family.

May God bless you and your loved ones in this New Year.

Julie Fantone Pritzel

Android Tablet Computers

Through the generosity of donors to the “Miles for Mustangs” Parent Teacher Group (PTG) October fundraiser, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School has adopted a technology program that includes the purchase of Android Tablet computers. With the funds raised we were able to purchase 85 tablets, protective covers and two charging carts.

These tablet computers, similar to the iPad, offer flexibility in the classroom that the computer lab lacks. With the tablet computers students have a mobile option very similar to having access to a laptop, yet even easier.

In the middle school the students provide their own tablet. There they are using programs to collaborate in the science lab. They use an application developed at the University of Michigan College of Engineering called WeCollaborify. Instead of working independently on projects, Sister Rebecca Mierendorf leads students in project based learning and students use the tablets to collaboratively build their knowledge together, either through diagramming a concept map or drawing a frame by frame illustration.

The tablets are being used for math intervention and enrichment in the lower grades. This helps students meet their full potential in learning and understanding math concepts. This tool is mobile so that students can work wherever they need to meet, whether that may be in the hall, an office or a small break off group in the classroom.



Our K – 6th grade teachers are anxiously awaiting the arrival of the tablets which are due soon. Lower elementary teachers are looking forward to using the tablets for reading & math programs and for dedicated daily center activities. Upper elementary teachers see the value of having flexible access to the internet for research, science and math applications, and the availability to quickly assess students’ prior knowledge and learning during a class. One of the greatest values to the tablet program is having mobile access to the internet and dedicated applications that allow our students and teachers flexibility for a more rich teaching and learning environment which can now happen outside the computer lab, and even outside of the classroom.



Grandparents’ & Special Friends’ Day

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School was a multi-generational family for a few hours last October. On a beautiful Friday morning, over 500 guests shared a memorable and faith-filled celebration during Grandparents’ & Special Friends’ Day, themed: **“Foundation of Faith - Family and Friends.”**

On Friday, October 18, 2013, with a breakfast reception beginning at 7:45 a.m. in the Parish Activities Center, Father James, our Pastor, and Mrs. Julie Pritzel, Principal, greeted grandparents and special friends and thanked all for attending. These loving role models traveled from near and far to attend this heart warming, biannual event.

Following the welcome, student violinists performed, as did an assortment of children’s choirs, led by teacher Mrs. Linda Opaleski. At 9:00 a.m., grandparents and special friends were dismissed to enjoy memorable and interactive classroom activities.

At 10:30 a.m., everyone gathered in the church for the most meaningful hour of the day - Mass together. Father James presided at the prayerful and joyful celebration. In his homily, Father James talked with grandparents and special friends, noting the importance of witnessing the Catholic faith as well as the love of Christ to their beloved grandchildren and friends.

“We are all God’s children,” he said. “We are a family of faith. Today we honor our Grandparents and Special Friends and thank them for their spiritual guidance and steadfast love. Grandparents and Special Friends pass on the faith and they connect us with our heritage and our roots through time. They are our treasured and holy foundation - a blessing to each and every one of us.”

Grandparents’ and Special Friends’ Day concluded at the end of Mass but the memories from the wonderful day live on! Co-Chairs **Traci Coffman** and **Michelle Updike** created a “forget-me-not” celebration. May God bless and protect all of our Grandparents and Special Friends.



St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Parish
2150 Frieze Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
(734) 821-2200
<http://www.stfrancisa2.com/school>

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Catholic Schools Week

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School observed **Catholic Schools Week** from January 26, 2014 until February 1, 2014. “*Catholic Schools - Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service*” was the theme of the celebration. **Faith, knowledge and service** - these elements are the foundation of a Catholic education.

Catholic Schools Week included a variety of activities that commemorated the special occasion, such as Masses, an Open House, fun student events, and a service project/coin collection for “Mary’s Meals.”

Catholic schools are a great gift to the church, and the nation. They strive for academic excellence and high moral standards. Most importantly, Catholic schools are communities of faith. These are the measures which any Catholic school can be judged.



Important Dates



- March 5:** Ash Wednesday
(9:15 a.m. Mass in the Church)
- March 6-7:** Mid-winter Break
(No School)
- April 7-11:** Common Calendar Week Break
(No School)
- April 18:** Good Friday
(No School)
- April 20:** Easter Sunday
- April 21:** Easter Monday
(No School)
- May 26:** Memorial Day
(No School)
- May 29:** Eighth-grade Graduation
(6:00 p.m. in the Church)
- May 30:** Ice Cream Social & Car Raffle
(Car Raffle Drawing at 8:00 p.m.)
- June 6:** Last Day of School
(11:15 a.m. Dismissal)