

Most Blessed Sacrament Catholic School Families,

Greetings in the Lord Jesus Christ! Over the summer I started here at Most Blessed Sacrament as the new pastor. It has been a whirlwind for me since then. The start of the school year is another round of firsts for me. I've already been so impressed with Mrs. Gioe and the school faculty. They are zealous for Catholic education and the ministry that our parish school offers to the community.

As we start the new year, there will be a new daily prayer custom that I've asked the school to embrace called the "Angelus." As you know well, every year on December 25th Christians celebrate the incarnation and birth of Jesus Christ. Nine months before that, on March 25th, we also celebrate His conception in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the Feast of the Annunciation. This is the day we recall when the angel of God, Gabriel, announced to Mary her role in salvation history as the mother of the Son of God. These critical mysteries of our faith, however, are too important to be remembered *only* on those two days. In truth this needs to be recalled every single day, because it is by this mystery – the coming of Emmanuel, God with us in the flesh – that we have reconciliation with God.

The Angelus is a way that these mysteries are remembered in prayer. The tradition in the Church is for a ringing of the church bells and praying of the Angelus three times a day. This is customarily done at dawn, noon, and twilight (6AM, 12PM, 6PM). The practice of the Angelus dates back several hundred years. It was recorded as a common practice 700 years ago and the form of the prayer prayed today is found in a 500-year-old catechism. There once was a time when most Catholics knew this prayer and prayed it at school and in their homes. On Sundays in Rome still today the Pope leads a public recitation of the Angelus along with a message which is aired on Italian national radio and TV.

Joining in this Catholic tradition, our whole school will mark the midday with a communal praying of the Angelus. It will be unfamiliar to many of the students at the beginning of the year, but they will learn it quickly. This daily reflection on the incarnation of God is a way for us to sanctify the time of our school day. It reminds all of us that God entered into time and human life. The 17th century priest and scholar Angelus Silesius once wrote, "Christ could be born a thousand times in Bethlehem – but all in vain until He is born in me." My hope is that this daily practice will help our students reflect on and experience the Birth of Christ in their lives.

Another new experience that will happen this year is a schoolwide consecration of the school, students, and faculty to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary. Consecration in general means that things and people are set apart for sacred purposes. This particular consecration is a dedication of ourselves, the students, and the school facilities for the glory and service of the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the prayer and intercession of His Blessed Mother Mary. The human Heart of Jesus, flesh and blood, is the Heart of God, pierced for us on the cross. We want to give ourselves totally to that Heart and acknowledge that He is the Lord of our school and that all we do is for Him.

I hope that as a family you are able to experience the graces that come from these devotions. There is nothing more important to me than supporting you in forming your young people to become holy saints of Jesus Christ. I look forward to growing closer to Christ with all of you during this school year.

Totus Tuus,

