

St. Mary School News

St. Mary School nurtures the development of the whole child: spiritually, academically, emotionally, and socially. St. Mary School provides a strong, accessible, and rigorous Catholic education to the students of greater Grays Harbor and their families.



A Publication for Alumni, Families, and Friends of St. Mary School

Students, Staff, and Families Celebrate Return to School

At 7:45 am on September 1st, the halls of St. Mary School were bustling with students making their way to classrooms to begin the new school year. Outside on the playground, smiling parents took first-day photos of their students and gave words of encouragement and goodbye hugs. In the classrooms, teachers welcomed students and showed them to their desks.

In normal times, this would be just another first day of school, but everyone knows the past year and a half have been anything but normal. For SMS students, teachers, and families having children at school with all their classmates for a full school day was something they hadn't experienced since March of 2020.

An added benefit of the return to a full-time schedule was that 26 new families enrolled students at SMS, the most that current staff can remember in recent history. Among these is the Lawrence family, with student Brooke and her parents Jason and Bethany (who is also working as a classroom aide).



“My family and I heard about St. Mary's through many friends that brought their kids here over the years,” said Bethany. “Jason and I prayed about

Students Maddison and Ethan Pettit with their dad, Shane arrive for the first of day of school



Students Fritz and Betsy Bold prepare for the first day of school.

where we wanted Brooke to go for school and felt St. Mary's was the right place. We love the sense of family here - the way all the staff truly care about the students is definitely shown! I also love that God is the center of the school. It has been an honor to work here with everyone and see my daughter grow!”

Teachers also expressed positive feelings: “St. Mary School teachers are so happy and grateful to be teaching from the classroom again,” said fourth grade teacher Lisa Villar. “It is the way teaching and learning is meant to be. Education is all about relationships and making connections and that happens best in a physical building. We know that students who have access to more stable and strong relationships are more academically engaged, have better social skills, and experience more positive behavior. “

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Return to School Mass: A Student's Perspective



By Judy Light, eighth grade

At St. Mary School, we attend a school Mass at the church every week. In the past, we gathered in the mornings in our "school family" groups of all different grade levels and walked to the church. The older kids would take a younger 'buddy'

or two to hold hands with while we crossed streets, just to be safe.

I remember that we would sing a wide array of hymns during the Mass. Some of the middle schoolers were even part of the choir, which was directed by Mrs. Folden. The sounds of music always echoed throughout the whole church.

From the spring of 2020 until this fall, we did not have school Mass because of COVID-19. It was very strange not to go to the church on Wednesday mornings with our groups. Closer to the end of the last school year, there

were a few online Masses where we watched from our classrooms.

This school year, we are able to attend Mass in person. However, there are still things that have not resumed, along with things that have changed.

When we sit down during Mass, we sit in our separate grade levels. The youngest kids sit in the front, with the middle schoolers in the furthest back pews. We also sit with social distance, meaning that there are only four to five people in each row.

We still do not sing during Mass. There is no procession down the center aisle. And only at the end of October did the altar servers resume most of their regular duties.

Even now, there are still things that haven't returned to normal. Who knows when we'll be back to 'normal.' Wearing masks everywhere has become the new 'normal' in life. But for now, it's good to be able to at least go to Mass.

SMS Announces Faculty and Staff Changes

The new school year brought not only a large group of new students to St. Mary School but a number of new staff members as well as some shifting of positions.



SMS is happy to welcome a new first-grade teacher, **Ashley Aschim**, who did some of her student teaching at the school and is starting her first full-time teaching position.



A brand-new position at SMS this year is that of Title I Reading Intervention Assistant, which is being filled by **Rachel White**, a long-time teacher who recently relocated from the Seattle area.



three religion classes.

With the retirement last spring of technology teacher Jennalee Cook, former second-grade teacher **Tifanie Kelly** moved into the technology position and also teaches



The second-grade teaching position was filled by former first-grade teacher **Susan Batcheller** who is moving up with her class from last year.

In the middle school grades, longtime teacher **Jolie Carroll** is stepping away from the classroom to take on the newly created position of Technology and Education Resources Director. In



this position, she will handle things such as keeping the school technology running smoothly and the curriculum up to date.



SMS also has two school parents serving as Instructional Aides in the classrooms. **Janelle Ancich** began helping out last year and is now working with first and second grades.



In addition, **Bethany Lawrence** is assisting in third and fifth grades

Gordy Scure Helps Keep School Shining

Gordy Scure started helping out at St. Mary School as a student in the 1940's and more than 70 years later, he's still at it. Gordy, who is now 84 and lives in Aberdeen with his wife Claudette, remembers being "encouraged" to do chores by the legendary pastor Father O'Donnell.

"He would have us stoke the furnace (with coal)," Gordy laughs, "And he also had us climb up a ladder to change the light bulbs in the auditorium. I was scared but he said 'get up there' and so I was up on the ladder shaking like a leaf trying to change the light bulbs."

It's ironic that Gordy's latest contribution to SMS will also involve someone climbing to the top of the building, although Gordy hopes to be on the ground watching this time. This past year Gordy worked with school leaders to have a new cross fashioned for the top of the building to replace the original concrete cross that is deteriorating.

"I looked at (the existing cross) for years and just thought it didn't look like it was in great shape," Gordy recalls. He not only offered to pay for the new cross, he knew just the person to fabricate it. Local metal craftsman Chuck Laier had done lots of projects involving fences and railings at Gordy's house and he knew Chuck would do a good job.

Once given the go-ahead, Chuck wasted no time in replicating the existing cross, using powder-coated steel that will hold up to the elements. The cross has a copper-colored patina to it and Gordy made sure that the plans included accent lighting to keep the cross visible at night. Another irony is that while awaiting installation, the new cross

is currently being stored in the school boiler room, about ten feet away from where Gordy used to stoke the furnace as a student.

Not all of Gordy's memories of student life at St. Mary involve physical labor. He also recalls many good times with fellow students who became lifelong friends such as Ted Bruener, Mike Silvey, and Pat Hughes. Gordy lived only four blocks from St. Mary Church and remembers volunteering to serve as an altar boy at the 7am Sunday Mass.

Gordy recalls that all the teachers were nuns and the principal, Sister Helen, always carried a ruler, "so there was no fooling around in those days." He also remembers being so well prepared by the nuns that when the SMS graduates went to Miller Jr. High for 9th grade, "we were a year ahead of the other students. Everything they tried to teach us, we already knew from the nuns!"

Gordy went on to attend Grays Harbor College while working at Saginaw shingle mill, before finding his niche in sales, first at A.W. Barkley Men's Store, and then at Wasson Buick-Cadillac-Pontiac, which later became Grays Harbor Honda. Gordy finally retired in 2019 after 47 years in the car business.

The installation of the new cross has been delayed by COVID shutdowns as well as the need to bring in a crane at a time when the school is not occupied. Still, Gordy Scure is eagerly looking forward to the day when the new cross is set in place.

"I tell people that's my first step up to the pearly gates," he laughs. "That's my ladder."



SMS alumnus Gordy Scure stands with the cross he donated for the top of the school building

School Snapshots



Students returned for the weekly school Mass for the first time in 18 months.



The eighth-grade class and chaperones at Leadership Camp



A Message From Mrs. Marlow

Dear St. Mary School Community and Supporters,

Despite the challenges of the past year and a half, the 2021-2022 school year at St. Mary School is off to a fantastic, full time, in-person start! Our school community was extremely excited to dive into the new school year and return to a “new normal” full of faith, friendship, and learning. Over the course of the summer we successfully prepared to welcome our students back to a full school schedule with all of the health and safety measures in place. In addition, in order to best serve our students and their learning needs, we made a few adjustments to faculty assignments and hired a new first grade teacher, Ashley Aschim, two new Instructional Aides, Janelle Ancich and Bethany Lawrence, as well as, a Title I Reading Intervention Specialist, Rachel White.

At our first ever outdoor Back to School Night we welcomed 132 students and 86 families, 26 of which were new to SMS. There was much excitement in the air as students dropped off their school supplies and met their teachers and parents safely gathered to learn about school volunteer opportunities and orient themselves to all the new health and safety rules. The first day of school brought crisp, new uniforms, many smiles, and classrooms full of children ready to learn. We thanked God for the opportunity to be St. Mary Lions and asked Mary to pray for us as we embarked on a new school year.

Now, at twelve weeks into the school year, our “new normal” feels like progress toward a steady school routine that works. The students and staff have returned to weekly school Masses at St. Mary Church; teachers have assessed student academic skill levels and created learning and intervention plans that are already moving students forward; staff and families are successfully navigating the daily safety and health challenges; and our fundraising committees and parent volunteers have already worked together to host a fabulous Oktoberfest fundraiser and annual evergreen sales. We are prayerful that as the school year unfolds we will be able to bring back more of our community events and extracurricular student activities.

As we make our way through winter and spring and work to cultivate Christian role models, life-long learners, and responsible citizens, we thank you for your support and prayers. While the last year and a half has been more challenging than we could have ever imagined, we have also been blessed beyond measure by those families who have continued to choose faith-based education for their children and all of those who have helped in many different ways to strengthen our resolve of bringing Catholic education to the youth of Grays Harbor. I feel blessed to work with an amazingly dedicated staff, to partner in student education with wonderful parents and families, and to have the constant daily guidance of the Holy Spirit in my life. May God be with us as we navigate the many celebrations and challenges that a school year can bring and may God bless us all abundantly.

Together in Christ,

Carrie Marlow
St. Mary School Principal



Teacher Feature

Kristin Scroggs: Strategizing to Achieve Student Success

Third-grade teacher Kristin Scroggs went from a nearly empty classroom during much of last year to having the largest class in the school with 18 students this

year. We asked Mrs. Scroggs to tell us about her time at St. Mary School.

Tell us about yourself both as a teacher and a person, including your time at SMS

I'm in my 15th year teaching full-time at St. Mary School, and most of those years have been in third grade. Prior to that I taught in the public schools (first grade for four years and middle school math for two years). I grew up in Mount Vernon, got my teaching degree at Washington State University and then taught for a couple of years in the Seattle area before meeting my husband Pete and moving to Aberdeen. We have an adult son and a daughter who is in college. In my spare time, I enjoy baking, getting together with friends, and traveling.

How has your time at SMS influenced you and/or your family?

I came to St. Mary School about the time our daughter Molly started preschool here and enjoyed having an inside perspective as she and her friends grew and matured as they went through SMS. My husband Pete also went to school at SMS many years ago and began working here part-time a few years ago, so it's been nice to have that connection between us.

I think that the faith-based curriculum here combined with our families' Christian values makes a big difference. Also, the fact that we are a small school helps families get to know one another and creates a sense of community. And the amount of diversity we have among our student population helps them and us see the world from multiple perspectives.

What aspect of teaching do you enjoy the most and why?

I love children and when I decided to become a teacher I wanted to make the learning experience more fun and meaningful. I really enjoy helping students who are

struggling with reading, math, or some other subject. I struggled myself as a reader in elementary school, and was more of a hands-on learner. It's very rewarding to come up with strategies that will help students overcome their challenges and see their excitement when they start to figure things out. I also like to individualize instruction to meet the needs of each student.

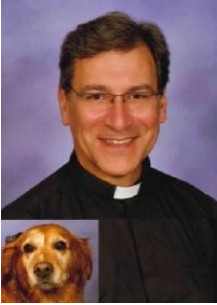
What are your plans and goals for this year and beyond?

My plan for this year is to try and help narrow the learning gap that was created by COVID, especially in the core subject areas like reading, writing, and math. Another challenge is that the students have a need to retrain themselves to be patient and wait their turn to talk, as well as re-learning other social skills like standing in line and sharing with others. On the positive side, it's wonderful having the kids back at school. We get to have discussions in the classroom about a variety of topics, and just spending time around their classmates makes a big difference.



Third grade teacher Kristin Scroggs works with a student .

Grays Harbor Catholic Parishes Welcome New Pastor



Note: In July, 2021, the Catholic Parishes and Missions of Western Grays Harbor joined with St. John Mission in Montesano and St. Joseph Parish in Elma to form the Catholic Parishes and Missions of Grays Harbor. At the same time, Archbishop Etienne appointed Father Freitag as pastor of the seven parishes and missions in the new region. The following is Father Freitag's letter of introduction to the region.

Hello Grays Harbor Catholics!

My name is Father Freitag. Born and raised in the great Pacific Northwest, I have four sisters, three brothers, and numerous nieces and nephews. I attended Our Lady of Fatima grade school, Queen Anne High School, and Gonzaga University. After college, I worked as an auditor for the accounting firm, Touche Ross. Two years later, I left to attend the University of South Carolina where I obtained a Masters in International Business. I then returned home to administrate Kenworth and Peterbilt truck sales (mostly loggers) in the Pacific Rim for PACCAR International.

After much prayerful discernment, I left PACCAR in 1991 to enter the pre-theology program at the Seminary of Christ the King in Mission, BC. I then attended Mundelein Seminary north of Chicago for four years of theological and pastoral formation. On June 8, 1996, Archbishop Murphy ordained me to the priesthood at St. James Cathedral.

For my first two assignments, I served as a Parochial Vicar: one year at St. Mary Magdalene, Everett, and two years at Sacred Heart and Assumption, Bellingham. In 1999, Archbishop Brunett named me Pastor of Our Lady Star of the Sea, Bremerton, where I served for nine years. He then sent me to Pastor St. Monica, Mercer Island, where I have served for the past thirteen years. Now, Archbishop Etienne is sending me to you as Regional Pastor responsible for overseeing the mission of the Church in all of Grays Harbor County.

Wherever I may be found on a given day, you may see a Golden Retriever following closely behind. That would be my companion in ministry, Sophia. She is nine years old and a bit shy but warms up quickly after a sniff or two of your shoes. Other than being with me, her greatest pleasures are eating anything chicken and swimming. Unfortunately, however, Sophia is not too fond of other animals, except perhaps for squirrels which should come as no surprise.

As for my personal interests, I enjoy walking Sophia while praying the Rosary, doing my own vehicle maintenance and upgrades, reading science fiction, and spending time with family and friends. I have a set of golf clubs and a fishing rod/reel but have not had the time or opportunity to use either the past several years. I also own a vacant lot in Ocean Shores where I like to go RVing with my sister and brother-in-law. Someday soon I hope to build a small home there to spend my time off and eventually retire as your Regional Pastor Emeritus.

By God's grace and your helping hands, I look forward to our many years ahead wherein we will faithfully proclaim and live out the Good News of our salvation through Our Lord Jesus Christ. May we always be assisted in our divine mission with the constant aid of Our Blessed Mother Mary, Our Lady of Good Help and the Olympics, as well as Saints Joseph, Jerome, John, Paul, and Dismas.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Freitag

Return to School, continued from page 1

Principal Carrie Marlow summed up the mood of the school community with these thoughts: "We cannot say enough about what a blessing it is to return to full-time school! Never again will we take for granted the gift of

friendship and community togetherness. Our students truly love being together in a place where Jesus is at the center. We are so thankful to be able to provide that once again."

Donations and memorial gifts, June 23 to November 15, 2021 (including donations to the SPIRIT Auction, April, 2021)

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