

*Never be in a hurry; do everything quietly and in a calm spirit.
Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever, even if
your whole world seems upset.*

St. Francis de Sales



November 15, 2020

Dear Parents,

Is there anyone among us that can say that going through this CoVid-19 experience is easy? It probably is one of the most challenging times that we have ever had to endure. We have traveled this road together while having to stay apart. As another Friday the 13th has passed, it calls to mind that dreaded Friday the 13th in March when schools went remote for the rest of the school year. It seems like a lifetime ago and so much has happened in the interim. As we strive to help your children thrive in this historic time please know that we do what we do for the love of them. They have been beacons of hope in this time of great confusion and have brought much joy to all of us. When this is all over, I hope that we will remember the resilience of the human spirit found in SVMS with our teachers radiating great prowess in a new way of teaching and the children radiating deep pride of being able to be together while still learning on a high level and you parents radiating great strength of character keeping your children protected and happy in this period of so many unknowns. I know we would love to wave the magic wand and 'poof' the virus away but we must travel through it in the best way possible. Yes! We are virus and caution weary but we are SVMS strong. It is tough to keep on going with an upbeat attitude but we owe it to our children to do the best for them so they may come out at the end of this tunnel unscathed in body, mind and spirit. Together we can continue to work to make sure that the wonderful voices of your children and their teachers can resound in all of classrooms for days and weeks and indeed months to come.

The first marking period ended on Wednesday and it was one full of graces and blessings. The Rediker portal will be opened in the late afternoon tomorrow which gives you the ability to view your child's grades from 2nd through 8th grade. Report Cards will be emailed

to parents of these grade levels also. This is a new endeavor for us and I ask that you please bear with us patiently if there should be any kinks. I thank Bridget Mantone for all of the hard work that she has put into getting this job done. Believe me when I tell you that it is no easy task! Conferences are happening virtually for the first time also on Tuesday and Wednesday and these will include the Kindergarten and First grade parents. Hopefully this enterprise will also go off without a hitch and you will meet our great faculty who love their profession and ply their trade so beautifully every day. I am so proud of each of them and feel so privileged to work with them. They have really bonded as a community and I am sure that you will join with me in acknowledging that we have the best!

Our Kindergarten children will celebrate the 50th day of school this week. They are going to take us back to the 50s and dress in the style of that decade. I love this day each year when the poodle skirts and the Rock 'n Roll dudes will come out in style. During this week also, we will help to support our veterans with red, white and blue tag days on Monday and Thursday. May God bless each and everyone of them!

We have been very lucky at SVMS to not have had a positive case among our staff and student body since we began in September - Thank God! We have been able to complete 10 weeks of uninterrupted teaching and learning and I know that you will agree that that has been a huge plus. During the past two weeks, we have had incidences of contacts with positive cases and thankfully those contacts did not test positive. We have had to keep two classes home for a day while testing was being done. Though not absolutely required, we decided that it was best to do this out of an abundance of caution. We are committed to maintaining confidentiality when dealing with all CoVid situations and will notify the whole school community only when there is a positive case while never naming the people involved. Prayers are being said fervently that we will continue on the road of zero cases. Remember that the wearing of the masks, social distancing and the washing of hands all act as deterrents and our students and staff are masters of these actions!

I thank you most sincerely for working closely with Nurse Reilly to cooperate with our CoVid policies and procedures. It is mandatory that you complete the **new digital** health screening form. We are getting close to 100% compliance. Many of you have kept children home when they exhibit the symptoms on the list. I am happy to report that when some school community members have traveled they have quarantined for 14 days. This is the attitude of caring that we hope will continue to manifest among us as we lead up to high gathering and traveling times. The governor has left it up to each school to decide what to do about going remote after Thanksgiving and after Christmas so SVMS will plug away at coming in, trusting that you will work with us to make in-person teaching and learning will last as long as possible.....right up to Christmas and beyond is the goal! I know that Nurse

Reilly has posted specific guidelines elsewhere in this eNews but I want to reiterate some here. If you travel to a hotspot please quarantine for 14 days. If you participate in a large family gathering at Thanksgiving it would be best to have your children stay out for a week to monitor symptoms. In both scenarios your children can connect to their classes via live-stream. By now I hope that you will agree with me that the teachers have nailed with the remote so your children should not miss a beat. I trust that each of us will do what we can to protect all of us.

We held our first virtual Open House on Tuesday and it went very well. Karyn Collins provided a digital framework from which we were able to present our school to prospective parents. She spoke eloquently from the perspective of a parent. Elle Perry did a beautiful job speaking about what SVMS has done for her as a student and as a person. Karyn developed a fantastic 360 digital tour that gives a wonderful inside look at a time when we cannot do in-person tours. The event was very well attended and Mary Brooks has followed up with the attendees to get information from them. We had great interest in our PreK Program. If any of you have children ready for the PreK or any grade level please let us know so that we can save your spots.

Even though time sometimes seems to be dragging and every day is like 'ground hog day' , we are moving toward registration in January for the next school year. I know that this will throw some of you off because no one knows what the future will bring. How will school open in September of 2021? No one knows.....but this I do know that the faith community of SVMS is a powerful one. I consider it a gift to be able to share this current experience with all of you and feel lifted every day by the presence of your children inside our building. I ask that you please stay with us on this rocky boat and I know that when we get to the other side we will be stronger in faith and deeper in love with a community that puts God first and considers a Catholic education worth all the sacrifices and the tuition.

We are joining the multitude of organizations that participate in Giving Tuesday on December 1st. Our website now has a Giving Tab. If your business is looking for somewhere to donate before the end of this fiscal year or you would like to donate, please consider SVMS. In this time of great struggle please know that there is no pressure to do this. I can only imagine the sacrifices that many of you have to make and I thank you for continuing to support us by sending your children here.

In this eNews, you will find another update from the Pandemic Response Team. We continue meet weekly with the development of the Phase II plan being the crux of our work for the past few weeks. As you can imagine there are multitudinous fluctuating variables to consider as we make a great effort to get everyone back into the building. We will continue to work and rework this plan and it will be the best day ever when we can put it into full motion. Monitoring the NJ Covid Map that displays the cases is important and Nurse

Reilly is in daily contact with the local health departments. I appreciate all of the members of the Pandemic Response team who present your input and that of the teachers on a weekly basis. There will be a Town Hall Meeting on Thursday at 7PM during which Fr. George and I and the team will address all questions that you can send to pandemic@svmsnj.org. Please know that the deadline for these questions is Wednesday at noon.

The good news of the week is that Josie Anderson in Mrs. Sheehy's PreK 4 welcomed a new baby brother this past week. His name is Patrick James and we cannot wait to meet him. May he be blessed with good health and may he bring great joy to his family.

Please do all that you can this week to protect and guard yourself from this virus. Know that I hold you all close in prayer and ask for prayer that all members of our school will be blessed with the health needed to keep us up and running.

Blessings,

Sr. Noreen