



December 7, 2019

Dear St. Mary's Families,

I hope your family has had a good week and that your time of Advent reflection and preparation is bringing you peace during the busy holiday season. Our days at St. Mary's are getting very busy as well! St. Mary's enjoyed a visit from St. Nicholas himself yesterday as we celebrated the **Feast of St. Nicholas**. St. Nicholas met students visiting with them about his life, his life-long mission to help children and those in need, and the traditions and celebrations of his feast day. Not only did St. Nicholas visit with us, he left goodies in our shoes as a wonderful surprise including oranges, gold coins, peppermints, and a Happy Birthday Jesus pencil. Kindergarten and First Grade have added their ornaments to our Jesse Tree this week, and other classes will be adding their ornaments in the coming days. Our tree will be filled with Advent-themed ornaments made with love and care by our students.

The **Secret Santa Shop** is coming to St. Mary's! The Secret Santa Shop will be open for student shopping **Wednesday, December 11th and Thursday, December 12th**. The Secret Santa Shop is set up in the Community Room near the Commons so our students can shop and pick out gifts for special people in their lives. Every item in the shop is \$2.50 and each gift will be securely placed in a gift bag with a tag. Students may bring money to school to shop with and may give it to their teacher to hold onto until they shop so it doesn't get lost. More information about the Secret Santa Shop was sent home yesterday in your child's folder. This is a

wonderful tradition at St. Mary's and a special treat for our students. Please call the school office with any questions you may have.

St. Mary's is continuing our gelatin/Jello drive to support the **Newton County Food Basket Brigade** through Thursday, December 12th. This group of volunteers prepares 1,000 Christmas food baskets to help those in need have a nice meal on Christmas, and we are trying to collect 2,000 boxes to include in the baskets. Jello is added to the food baskets each year because it is a dessert that needs no additional ingredients other than water for those who may not have milk or other dessert ingredients available to them. Any flavor or brand of gelatin/Jello may be donated. A box for Jello donations is set up on the north wall of the Commons, and all donations are greatly appreciated!

Speaking of Christmas, please make plans to join us for special Christmas programs to celebrate the holiday season. Join us on Thursday evening, **December 12th for the 1st – 5th Grade** Christmas program, starting at 6:30 p.m. in the church with a hot cocoa and cookie reception following the performance in the Parish Hall. This will be a special time to visit with friends and family before the Christmas holiday and enjoy a cookie or two. Father Joe has graciously allowed us to use the sanctuary again this year for the program, and wanted to stress the reverence that is expected within this sacred place. The sanctuary is not a concert hall nor an auditorium, and Father Joe asks parents and grandparents to remember this. Parents and grandparents are asked to stay seated during the program, and not come forward to sit on the floor in front of the pews during performances. **Early Learners - Kindergarten** students will have their Christmas program on **Monday, December 16th** at 10:00 a.m. in the Parish Hall. There will be special seating for family members and the students from the elementary grades will also attend the morning performance for our youngest St. Mary's students.

Friday, December 20th is an early dismissal day, with school dismissing at 11:00 a.m. There will be no after-school care or afternoon bus service on this day. Our school community will celebrate Friday Mass at 8:30 a.m. and gather in the Commons for Christmas caroling afterwards. Classroom Christmas parties begin at 10:00 a.m. There are Christmas party sign-up sheets on many of the bulletin boards next to classrooms, so please take a peek to sign up to bring treats, needed supplies, and/or lend a helping hand. Classroom parties are always more fun when lots of parents can attend to enjoy the day as well!

Thank you and take care,

Joanne Lown

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Upcoming Dates to Remember:

Wednesday, December 11th -

Secret Santa Shop at St. Mary's

Thursday, December 12th

Thursday, December
12th 1st -5th grade
Christmas Program, 6:30 p.m. in Church
with Cookie & Hot Cocoa Reception
following in Parish Hall

Monday, December
16th Early
Learners-Kindergarten Christmas Program,
10:00 a.m. in Parish Hall

Thursday, December 19th

Ugly Sweater Day and Free Dress Day

Friday, December 20th
a.m.

Early Dismissal for Christmas Break at 11:00

No After-School Care

No Afternoon Bus Service

December 21st – January 5th

Christmas Break

Monday, January 6th

Classes Resume