



December 12, 2020

Dear St. Mary's Families,

I hope your family is happy and healthy as we move into our final week of school before Christmas Break. School days are always purposeful and busy at St. Mary's, and this week was no exception. On Monday, **St. Nicholas visited our school in celebration of his feast day on December 6th**. In addition to visiting with the students about his life, his devotion to and service for Christ, and special love for children, he also magically filled the shoes of our students and faculty while visiting with them. When students returned to their classrooms they found that St. Nicholas had filled their shoes with his traditional gifts of an orange, gold chocolate coins (although he left solid gold coins during his lifetime), a candy cane, and other gifts of the season as a special treat. This was an enriching way to extend the classroom teaching of this important saint and share in the joy of the Christmas season! In addition to St. Nicholas visiting, the school participated in our annual **Ugly Sweater Day** on Thursday, which is always a colorful, festive, and fun day of Christmas shirts and sweaters.



During our School Mass on Friday morning, some of Mrs. Black's 5th grade Spanish students gave a beautiful presentation in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe, whose feast day we celebrate today, December 12th. The Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe commemorates the appearance of the Virgin Mary to Juan Diego as he was walking toward the Hill of Tepeyac on December 12th, 1531. Mary ordered Juan Diego to go to the Bishop and ask him to build a church at the Hill of Tepeyac. Juan Diego ran to the Bishop to tell him what the Virgin Mary had told him, but the Bishop didn't believe what Juan was telling him. The Virgin Mary appeared again in front of Juan Diego and told him to collect flowers from the top of the hill, but because it was December Juan Diego knew that there was not going to be any flowers at the rocky hill. Upon reaching the top of the hill, Juan Diego was surprised to see that it was covered with colorful and beautiful flowers. Juan collected the flowers using his overcoat and ran again to see the Bishop. When Juan gave the coat full of flowers to the bishop, the bishop discovered the image of Virgin Mary's picture was miraculously traced on the coat. Seeing both the unseasonal flowers and the image of the Virgin, the Bishop realized Juan Diego had told him the truth and The Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe was built on the hill of Tepeyac in Mexico City. Catholic Culture's website tells us that the tilma of Juan Diego has been the subject of much modern research. The tilma, woven out of coarse cactus fiber, should have disintegrated after 20 years, but although over 500 years have passed the tilma is still in perfect condition. The pupils of Mary in the picture reflect the Indians and clergy present at the time of the first revelation of the image. No paint was used, and chemical analysis has not been able to identify the color imprint. Additionally, studies have revealed that the stars on Mary's

mantle match exactly what a Mexican would have seen in the sky in December of 1531. For more information of Our Lady of Guadalupe and ways your family may celebrate this feast day at home, please read the following link:

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/calendar/day.cfm?date=2020-12->

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If you need help thinking of a special gift for someone this Christmas, St. Mary's and Club 609 may just have the perfect gift for everyone on your Christmas list! Club 609 has generously offered to sell gift certificates, with 50% of the purchase price donated to Fifth Grade's Spring Field Trip Fund. Not only does this help 5th grade with the fundraising for this annual event, but it also provides a wonderful experience for you or your gift recipient at Club 609. Please fill out the attached form and return it with payment to St. Mary's School Office no later than Wednesday, December 16th. Cash and checks written to Club 609 are accepted forms of payment. Gift card order forms may be turned in at any time before December 16th and purchased gift cards may be picked up in the school office or sent home with your child. Please contact Sally Robinson (417-483-6484) with any questions you may have.

Christmas Parties at St. Mary's will be held on Friday, December 18th this year. Due to the recent surge in Covid cases, we have decided that room parents and/or other volunteers will not be able to attend class parties as a precaution. Teachers will ensure that parties are amazing and fun, and I am sure they will share photos of all the Christmas cheer taking place. Home and School will be providing snacks for each class to enjoy during the party, and students may bring treat bags to share with their classmates as party favors if they wish. Even though festivities may look a little different this year due to Covid, our students will still have a wonderful time celebrating at school and keeping the joy of Christmas in their hearts. Please don't forget that December 18th is a noon dismissal day as well as our Christmas party day, and After School Care WILL NOT be provided due to the Christmas holiday.

Instead of in-person Christmas programs this year, we will be making a taped performance of each class and downloading it into your child's Google Classroom for your family to enjoy. Christmas programs are one of my favorite events of the school year, but the

reality of Classes singing together in close proximity to each other in a standing room only audience presents obvious challenges this year. Ms. Crabtree, our incredible music teacher at St. Mary's, has done a beautiful job planning something special for each class and extending the program into the classroom as well. This year's elementary program has a Nutcracker theme, and she invited a close friend from Germany to visit with each class to discuss German Christmas traditions and nutcrackers. Classes will tape their music segments this week during music class and we will have performances downloaded into Google Classrooms as soon as possible.

This year's JACS Auction will be a virtual one in response to the continuing challenges that Covid-19 presents. If you would like to be part of the fun in helping to plan the annual JACS event, please contact Stephanie Bradshaw by email at stephaniej_1@hotmail.com or by phone [316-259-6593](tel:316-259-6593). The JACS Auction is an important and fun event for our school, and the funds raised help support the cost of our educational system. Thank you for considering being part of the planning team!

I hope you have a wonderful weekend with your family as the wintery weather moves into the Joplin area. Thank you for all that you do for your child, especially teaching him or her the special place Christ has in our lives and sending him or her to St. Mary's where the love of Christ and others is nurtured and practiced each day.

God bless and take care,
Joanne Lown
jlown@jacss.org

Important Dates to Remember:

Thursday, December 17 th	Crazy Christmas Sock and Free Dress Day!
Friday, December 18 th	Class Christmas Parties Noon Dismissal NO After School Care
Monday, January 4 th	Classes Resume