

ST. PAUL ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH  
193 WYCKOFF AVENUE  
RAMSEY, N.J. 07446

12 September, 2019  
Feast of the Holy Name of Mary

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Greetings in the Lord!

I am very grateful for the wonderful *"Back To School Night"* we experienced this year. I could feel the Holy Spirit moving among us, uniting us in a common mission: to help our children come to know Christ and develop a foundation of faith that will last throughout their lives. Special thanks to Tracy Graham, the PFG, and SAB, the faculty, and all those who participated. I asked Ms. Graham if I could send a letter to all of you so that I could follow up on some of the thoughts shared, especially as it pertains to the relationship between the Academy of St. Paul and St. Paul Church.

Our own patron St. Paul wrote in his letter to the Corinthians: *"Christ is a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of different parts...So, then, the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you!' Nor can the head say to the feet, 'Well, I do not need you!' And so there is no division in the body, but all its different parts have the same concern for one another. If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it; if one part is praised, all the other parts share its happiness. We are the Body of Christ, and each one is a part of it."* This is true for the Catholic (Universal) Church, and it is also true for each parish community. Over sixty years ago, the Catholics of St. Paul Parish decided to build a school in which their children could learn those things that would prepare them for a good life in this world and in the next. For many decades now, this school (now known as a Blue Ribbon Academy) has fulfilled that mission, and continues to do so until this very day.

About six years ago, the Archdiocese of Newark (of which we are a part) instituted a new structure for all of the Catholic schools of the Archdiocese. The reason was to strengthen every individual school, and to give all 220 parishes the opportunity to support Catholic education (even if they didn't have an active school on their campus as part of their parish). Called *"Lighting the Way"* this new model placed all of the administrative responsibilities for the schools in the local principal working in conjunction with a central office in Newark. *"Lighting the Way"* did not separate schools from parishes: each school still remains part of the evangelical, educational, and spiritual mission of the parish. Each school building still remains part of the physical plant of the parish community, the local pastor still remains the spiritual head of the school, and the school and parish community work together (along with all the other parish ministries) to proclaim the love of Christ. This is as it should be because Christ is not two but One. The school, although it operates with its own budget independent of the parish, is still part of the parish. The parish, no longer solely responsible for any deficit a school might incur, sends part of its monthly Mass collection (and any other income) to the Archdiocese for the support of its school. The local parish school also occupies (as it was intended from the beginning) parish buildings, not as a tenant with a lease, but as a part of the family in its own proper space. This is a joy for the parish community, a great privilege, and a great responsibility: Christ's family working together to be certain His children know and love Him.

Since my arrival as pastor of St. Paul Parish over three years ago, one of my priorities has been to unite the Academy and parish more deeply in a bond of true faith and love. The priests have tried to be as

involved in the life of the Academy as possible. In an effort to facilitate communication in a spirit of love and shared mission, we created an “ad hoc” committee (compromised of two Academy parents, two members of the parish Finance Council- one of whom is also an Academy parent- the principal and myself) to approach fundraising in such a way as to not overburden our people while allowing Academy and parish to remain as fiscally healthy as possible. Through the work of this committee, and with the help of Donna Schifano, the parish calendar and facilities schedule have been opened to the Academy to help everyone have access to the buildings as needed. This Committee will continue to work to facilitate these important goals.

In addition, as I work to form a new Parish Council here at St. Paul, the SAB as well as some parents/faculty who are parishioners will become part of this council. Also, a member of the SAB will become part of the Finance Committee. This is an effort to increase communication and work together with a common goal. I have great hopes for the future as we move forward together.

I wanted to address one last topic: In the Catholic Church, while all ministries are important, each must find its origin, its nourishment, and its goal at the altar. The Church is a Eucharistic community, it is not primarily an educational or catechetical community, nor it is primarily a community that counsels or serves the poor. While all of these ministries are inherently what the Church does, they all need to flow from the Eucharist and back to the Eucharist (because while all these ministries are the work of human beings, the Eucharist is the work of Christ **because it is Christ Himself**). The most important thing any parish in the world does is celebrate Holy Mass on Sunday- everything else the parishes does finds its energy source in Holy Mass, and has as its goal the celebration of Holy Mass. *How we should love the Mass!* St. John Vianney said, *“If we really understood the Mass, we would die of joy.”* Here we encounter Christ Himself, present Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, and (when we receive worthily) become one with Him in Holy Communion. This is literally heaven on earth, and if we don’t instill in our children a love for Christ in the Holy Mass, we are not fulfilling God’s Will. St. Alphonsus Liguori once said: *“Children have not been given to parents as a present which they may do with as they please, but as a trust, for which, if lost through their negligence, they must render an account to God.”* I believe this is true for a parish and school community as well. For this reason, I ask you: whichever parish you belong to, BRING YOUR CHILDREN FAITHFULLY TO SUNDAY MASS! I say this not only for your children’s benefit but also for your own. If you would like to help us make the 9 A.M. Sunday Family Mass more child-friendly, *please join our Family Mass Committee* (contact me and I can connect you with them). Also, here at St. Paul we have Mass every Sunday evening at 7 p.m. and other local parishes also have Sunday evening Mass (so no one can say they don’t have the opportunity for Mass). And remember, weekday Mass can never replace Sunday Mass because on Mt. Sinai when God gave Moses His commandments, He told His people to *“Keep Holy the Lord’s Day”*. For Christians, this day is Sunday, the First Day of the Week, the Day of Christ’s Resurrection.

Thank you for your patience in reading this letter, I felt a great responsibility to communicate these things to you. I promise to do all within my power to continue to make our Academy of St. Paul a great environment for our children and a wonderful place to know Christ and His love, beyond which nothing else in the end will really matter. If you have any questions, please let me know.

***Peace in Jesus and Mary,  
Father John Gabriel, Pastor***