

Mary, Queen of Peace

May 14th, 2018

Mary, Queen of Peace families and friends,

Blessings, I hope this letter finds you well. Springtime often sparks changes within a school faculty. Teachers and staff reflect upon their accomplishments and set new goals. During the process, they discern where God is calling them. At Mary, Queen of Peace, most teachers and staff follow Mrs. Jeannie Harris' lead, our longest-serving educator, by making a joyful recommitment to supporting the mission of our excellent parish school.

Other members of the faculty can related to the apostle Peter. In Matthew 14:22-32, we read the story of Jesus walking on water. The verses that suggest change read ""Jesus spoke to them at once. "Courage!" he said. "It is I. Do not be afraid!" Then Peter spoke up. "Lord, if it is really you , order me to come out on the water to you." "Come!" answered Jesus. So Peter got out of the boat and started walking on the water to Jesus.""

Peter's boat serves as a metaphor of a place of familiarity and comfort. As a fisherman by trade, Peter knew the workings of a boat very well. It provided him with security and protection. Walking on water symbolizes change. Peter longed to go to Jesus, but the act of walking on water was foreign. Through faith and courage, Peter was able to face change. Jesus's simple but powerful word of "come" can be presented in many ways in our lives. It might be in the yearning to spend more time with one's family or asked to be part of a different ministry. Jesus has called the following teachers and staff to have "courage" and follow Him elsewhere. On behalf of Father John Vien, it is bittersweet to announce the following departures. It is sad to see our brothers and sisters in Christ leave, but we will share in their joy as they continue to grow closer to Jesus.

After thirty-one years, Mrs. Polly Mertz has decided to retire. She has kept us grounded by knowing the history and operation of Mary, Queen of Peace School's Technology Department. Mrs. Mertz has pushed us forward by implementing robotics and green screen into our curriculum. She will probably be most remembered by producing the Morning Show. Hopefully, the rubber chicken will find its way on future episodes. Better yet, it will be nice to have Mrs. Mertz appear as a future guest host. Please keep her in your prayers as she enjoys time with her family and other passions.

The Art Department will also see a change next year. Ms. Terry Hawksley has decided not to sign her contract. We will miss her calm demeanor with the students and friendly reception towards prospective families. Ms. Hawksley's successor will need to mirror her creative genius. Over the years, the students have created some wonderful pieces of art under Ms. Hawksley's direction. Please keep her in your prayers as she discerns where God is calling her.

Mrs. Mertz's working partner and friend, Mrs. Debbie Forthaus, has decided to explore other options. We will miss her friendly approach with the children and teachers. She has the gift of explaining complicated technical

issues into simple layman terms. Along with Ms. Hawksley and students, Mrs. Forthaus has created beautiful yearbooks. Please keep her in your prayers as she seeks God's direction on how to best share her talents.

Next year, Linc and I will definitely miss going into room 215 and seeing children working on the floor, in oversized chairs, and at a traditional desk. Mrs. Tina Schultz has decided to continue her ministry in Catholic education at Saint Catherine Labouré. She has promised to stay in touch and continue to share her progressive approaches, especially with maker space, with Mary, Queen of Peace's faculty. Please keep Mrs. Schultz in your prayers as she prepares to join another community.

With the successful Cinco de Mayo program, Senora Maria Osorio is leaving us on a high-note. The presentation showcased our Spanish curriculum along with art and music. Our new Spanish teacher will follow Senora Osorio's lead by having our students present similar programs in the future. We appreciate Senora Osorio's willingness to show us the value of having a second language in our fine parish school. Please keep her in your prayers as she prepares for change.

God has called Mrs. Stephanie Hagopian to focus more on her family, especially as she prepares for the birth of her third child. Mary, Queen of Peace is very grateful for her ability to connect with students, parents, faculty, and the community at-large with a bright smile. We look forward to the day when she is called to serve in a school again. Please keep Mrs. Hagopian and her family in your prayers.

Caitlin Higgins will not be part of our community next year. We will miss loyalty and cheerful demeanor. Ms. Higgins has served as a second mother to many of our young children. Please keep her in your prayers as she follows God's lead.

Donna Maurer will not be returning next year to work with our students, especially during the sacramental years. We will miss her passion in preparing the children for First Reconciliation, First Communion, and Confirmation. Please keep Mrs. Maurer in your prayers as she discerns where God is calling her.

Mrs. Carrie Hauck has decided to seek a ministry that is closer to her home in Ellisville. We will miss her ability to bond with her students in and outside the classroom. It was an honor to work with my former colleague from Saint Clare of Assisi. Please keep Mrs. Hauck in your prayers as she focuses more on her family.

Mrs. Erin Dwyer has decided to explore a different ministry by assisting the elderly. We are grateful for her devotion to our mission as our first speech therapist. She has shown us the benefits of having such a position on our staff. Mrs. Dwyer found time to work with several of our students and collaborate with many teachers. Her devotion has shown that several individuals can benefit from inclusion. Please keep her in your prayers as she begins a new journey.

Mr. Adam Winebright has decided to answer God's call by returning to the ministry of teaching young men in high school. In just three-quarters, he has made a tremendous positive impact on our community. Mr. Winebright not only knows his subject matter, but he also has shown he is able to connect with all the students. We will miss his ability to mentor others in an easy-going way. Please keep Mr. Winebright in your prayers as he prepares to join the community at Chaminade.

As Terry Menner retires, our maintenance team will look differently next year. Mary, Queen of Peace appreciates the many years that Mr. Menner has served our community. Last spring, when he fell on the parking lot, I saw his devotion to Mary, Queen of Peace. If parents and I were not present, he would have crawled back into the building to finish his nightly duties. We will miss his devotion of humbly doing tasks that we often take for granted. Please keep Mr. Menner in your prayers as he enjoys his other interests.

Mr. Jim Matzker is also leaving the maintenance team. We will miss his resourcefulness and the way he took certain children under his wing. Mr. Matzker often visits with the students during lunch and mentors to them during restorative reflection. Last year, he even bonded with a kindergartener. They spent time walking with each other throughout the building in the afternoon. The young student was even presented with a set a keys and name badge that read maintenance. Please keep Mr. Matzker in your prayers as he discerns were God is leading him.

Finally, Mr. Darnell Swanigan is leaving the maintenance team. We will miss his bright smile and friendly demeanor. Please keep Mr. Swanigan in your prayers as he follows God's direction.

As stated above, we will miss all those who are leaving our community. We appreciate their time and devotion to the mission of Mary, Queen of Peace School. My next letter will announce some in-house changes and new faces to our terrific parish school.

The faculty and I are affirmed by your endless prayers, support, and trust.

Prayerfully,

Mr. Michael Nieman
Mary, Queen of Peace – Principal