

# St. Mary School

2017 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER  
FOR ALUMNI, DONORS, FRIENDS AND PARENTS

## LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

*Dear Friends of St. Mary School,*

We are very pleased to bring you the 4th issue of the annual newsletter for our alumni, donors, friends, sponsors and parents of St. Mary School.

Educating students in Gilroy and our neighboring communities in the Catholic tradition for 146 years, we challenge our students to fulfill their individual potential and be active learners, people of faith and responsible citizens.

The 2016-2017 8th grade class theme, "Lead with Your Heart," was not only embraced and honored throughout the year, but also encouraged all our students to demonstrate their understanding of what it means to live and act like Jesus through their many and varied acts of service. St. Mary School students continue to shine academically, performing well above national averages in all grade levels. It's no wonder why our 8th grade students are not only accepted into their first choices for high school, but many are placed in honors courses! Visitors to our school will often remark on the level of respect and courtesy demonstrated by our students and staff both on and off our campus.



Reflecting on this past year, I am truly honored to be the leader of this fantastic group of students, volunteers and educators! As we head into the 2017-2018 school year, we will become one of the ten schools in the Diocese of San Jose to be a part of the Drexel School System. This change in governance will allow our excellent staff to collaborate with fellow grade-level teachers throughout the Diocese to build upon their exceptional instructional skills and provide all our students with the outstanding Catholic education we know is the tradition here at St. Mary School. Facility upgrades and tuition assistance for those wishing to attend a Catholic school have been made possible through a generous grant through the Drexel School System. We look forward to the changes ahead and hope you find some time this year to visit our fabulous school to see and experience our renewed excitement in Catholic education.

St. Mary School's outstanding accomplishments and wonderful activities would not be possible without the numerous donations of time, treasure and talent from all in our community. We thank you for your continued support of St. Mary School and our mission to educate the next generation of community leaders.

God bless you,  
Pamela Greteman

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## STUDENTS SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Following a long-time tradition, SMS students gave of their time and talents to support a remarkable number of community service events this year.

- **THANKSGIVING FOOD DRIVE** –

Students very generously donated 716 pounds of food and collected more than \$1,300 for the purchase of hams and turkeys for the annual Thanksgiving food drive benefiting families served by St. Joseph's Family Center.



- **CHRISTMAS TOY DRIVE** – For the SMS annual Advent project, students donated and helped collect 2,500 toys and \$2,500 in monetary donations from the community. Junior high students spent a Saturday delivering the toys and Christmas food baskets to St. Joseph's Family Center clients to help brighten Christmas for local children and families.

- **ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI ANIMAL RESCUE** – As a second Advent project, students generously donated bleach, paper towels, kitchen bags, dryer sheets, laundry detergent, and bath towels to St. Francis of Assisi Animal Rescue, which rescues and finds homes for abandoned, neglected, stray and surrendered dogs and cats.

- **LORD'S TABLE** – During the school year, 4th through 8th grades rotated each month and served hot meals at the Lord's Table, a program that serves meals to the homeless and low-income families in our community. While too young to serve, Kinders through 3rd grade also contributed by collecting new socks, making hygiene bags, creating Valentine cards, and many other contributions to support the clients who attend the Lord's Table.



- **PENNIES FOR PATIENTS** – To support Catholic Schools Week with a service project, SMS teamed up with the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, which is the world's largest voluntary health organization dedicated to funding blood cancer research and providing education and access to treatment for patients. The school set a goal of collecting \$1,500 but surpassed the goal by 20% and instead collected \$1,810!

- **ITALIAN CATHOLIC FEDERATION (ICF)** – Our junior high students earned service hours working at the Polenta Dinner and the Annual Taste of Italy Peeled Shrimp & Ravioli Dinner. Students worked hard helping with set-up, serving during the events, and cleanup after the events. ICF has been a long-time supporter of our 8th grade graduation scholarship program, and we are pleased that our students can give back to the ICF with their time.

- **ST. MARY SCHOOL IN ZIMBABWE** – For this year's Lenten Mission service project, the annual rummage sale generated funds that were donated to St. Mary Catholic School in Zimbabwe, Africa. Founded in 1935 by Catholic missionaries, the school has 850 students and 20 teachers, and while the school has computers, it does not have funds to cover the \$90 monthly fee for Internet access. From SMS' rummage sale and a 6th grade bake sale, St. Mary School made a total donation of almost \$1,300 to our sister school in Zimbabwe.

- **RELAY FOR LIFE** – Again this year, students collected cans of food, which were used in the luminaries for the Relay for Life event to support the American Cancer Society's research efforts and cancer patient assistance. At the end of the event, the cans were donated to St. Joseph's Family Center.

- ... and our junior high students continued to put in many service hours within the SMS and Gilroy communities working toward their service blocks for graduation!

## STUDENTS AND CATHOLIC IDENTITY

As a Catholic school, we are committed to providing the best learning experience possible for our students in an active Christ-centered Catholic community. In addition to religion taught in the classroom, SMS also offers numerous events throughout the year for students to share and experience their faith.

- Students celebrated the 5th grade at a Mass to bless their new **Bibles**, an annual tradition at St. Mary School.

- Always a popular event, Fr. Gener blessed our students' furry, feathered and scaly friends during the traditional **Blessing of the Animals** in celebration of the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals.

- Students performed the annual **Advent Program** for families and guests with a play, *Sheep in Heavenly Peace*, by the 8th grade reflecting the story of the Nativity supported by the rest of the grades in band and song performances on the altar.

- Students and their art instructor created an **Installation Nativity Art Scene** in the school lobby to celebrate the Christmas season. The scene measured 10 feet tall by 12 feet wide. The project concept came from Peru and was designed to give the school a beautiful Nativity scene and also to teach new cultural traditions that broadened the students' knowledge about Christmas celebrations in other countries.



- **Catholic Schools Week** kicked off with a family Mass followed by activities throughout the week celebrating Catholic schools in the community and nation; and our Catholic faith within our faculty, staff, parent, student and volunteer groups. The week began with a proclamation by Gilroy Mayor (and parishioner) Roland Velasco pronouncing Catholic Schools Week and culminated with the **19th Annual Grandparents Day** where students honored their grandparents with a Mass, brunch and class performances.

- During **Lent**, in commemoration of Jesus' last days on Earth as a man, students acted out the Stations of the Cross each week, and the 8th grade performed the Passion on Holy Thursday.

- After preparing all year, our 2nd grade received the **Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion**.



The class had a wonderful retreat in celebration, and the school held a beautiful Mass to celebrate the 2nd grade students' new status in the church.

- As a beautiful spring tradition, St. Mary School students brought flowers from home and had a procession for the annual **May Crowning** in honor of Mary, the Blessed Mother.

# ST. MARY SCHOOL JOINS THE DREXEL SCHOOL SYSTEM!

After much research and consideration with the principal, parish pastor, faculty, staff and parent leaders, St. Mary School decided to apply for and was accepted into the Drexel School System in the Diocese of San Jose beginning with the 2017-2018 school year. After looking at the data, evaluating the effectiveness and impact of joining the Drexel School System; observing teachers, curriculum and students in current Drexel schools; and assessing the benefits for our school, the decision was made that becoming a Drexel school was in the best interest of SMS.

## What does this mean for the school?

Four pillars make up the Drexel System: accessibility, achievement, accountability and Catholic authenticity. Through additional Drexel funding combined with the current tuition assistance program, SMS is making a Catholic education accessible for all who want it. The school will receive increased instructional resources, training and support for teachers; increased professional collaboration for the sharing and development of best practices to support student learning; increased on-campus resources for instruction and integration of best practices for teachers and administration; the opportunity to be part of a collaborative system of schools committed to continuous improvement; funding for building improvements and a technology upgrade; and professional development partnership for teachers with Santa Clara University. Most importantly, the students will receive increased benefits in the classroom through new models of teaching using additional technology, small group sessions, and the ability for the teacher to easily scale instruction up or down depending on individual student needs.

We are excited to have the opportunity to join the Drexel System. The support for our entire school community and the promise of improvement for the instructional experiences for our students and professional development experience for our teachers will be amazing opportunities. Looking to the future, we believe it is the perfect time to take our school to the next level and are confident we will benefit greatly from joining the Drexel School System.

More details can be found in a short video at <https://vimeo.com/179217402>



## A HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO OUR 2016-2017 DONORS AND SPONSORS!!

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## SPORTS ACHIEVEMENTS

A long-standing tradition, St. Mary School continued to offer a robust sports program for students in 5th through 8th grades made possible by our tireless volunteer coaches and funded by the Spaghetti Dinner proceeds. As in previous years, the 2016-2017 school year saw outstanding achievements by our student athletes.

**Volleyball** 6th grade girls – Undefeated Champions

**Track** 3 school records broken  
14 medals: 3 gold, 7 silver, 4 bronze  
2nd and 3rd place team wins

**Basketball** 8th grade boys – Undefeated Champions  
5th grade boys – Undefeated Champions

**Knights of Columbus Basketball Free Throw State Championship**  
3rd place (age 10 boy) and 4th place (age 11 girl)

# Congratulations Class of 2017

Exemplifying the high-quality education students receive at St. Mary School, our 8th grade students were accepted to their first choices for Catholic and private high schools to which they applied. Many students were offered multiple acceptances, and many were admitted with honors to their new schools. For those students moving on to public schools, they also were placed in honors and advanced placement programs.

SMS students are well prepared for high school and beyond with multiple opportunities to self assess and reflect on their learning. Their time at St. Mary School culminates with the Student Learning Portfolio and interview. Our students created a comprehensive binder of their assessments and future goals accompanied by a display board to showcase personal achievements and interests that they presented in an interview with business professionals, community leaders, alumni and parishioners. We are proud of all 34 students in our Class of 2017 and wish them much success in their high school careers as they head off to Archbishop Mitty High School, Bellarmine College Prep, Christopher High School, Gilroy Early College Academy (GECA), Gilroy High School,



Live Oak High School, Monte Vista Christian School, Oak Ridge High School, Presentation High School, Valley Christian High School, Saint Francis High School (Mountain View), and St. Francis High School (Watsonville).

## ALUMNI REUNION

In May, the SMS Class of 2013 returned for a reunion with their classmates before heading off to college in the fall. Almost all of the 27 students from the class attended for an evening of laughter and reminiscing, reconnecting with classmates, and visiting with their teachers. Always a favorite at the alumni reunions was a visit to the gym with Mr. Sanchez to run some of their old PE drills. Congratulations to our SMS alumni as they move on to Boston College, Brown University, Cabrillo College, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo (SLO), Coast Guard Academy, Colorado State University, CSU Stanislaus, Gavilan College, Gonzaga University, Marymount Manhattan College, Mission College, Modesto Junior College, San Francisco State University, Sonoma State University, St. John's University, Texas Christian University, UC Santa Cruz, University of Nevada at Las Vegas, University of Nevada at Reno, University of Portland, University of Southern California (USC), and one alumni will be entering the United States Air Force. The SMS community wishes the Class of 2013 much success!!



**ALUMNI, WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!** We are building our Alumni Program and want to hear from our alumni about what they are doing in their personal, professional and academic lives and invite ALL alumni to keep us updated on your news and achievements! Send your news to Denise Garibaldi, Development Director, at [dgaribaldi@dsj.org](mailto:dgaribaldi@dsj.org).

**Save the Date!**

**Class of 2014  
Alumni Reunion  
April 25, 2018**

## OUR 2016-2017 DONORS AND SPONSORS!!

(continued)

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## What Was New In 2016-2017?

- **WELCOME NEW FACULTY** – This past year, we welcomed to the St. Mary School community Chantal Adams, 3rd grade teacher; Paula Reynolds, 5th grade teacher; and Amy Scatena, 3rd grade teacher's aide. They joined an excellent team of SMS teachers and brought fresh ideas and teaching skills to their students.
- **WEBSITE** – St. Mary School's website underwent a revision this year and went live during Catholic Schools Week. For convenience, families can now apply online on the new site or download application forms. Features of the upgraded site allow news and events to be posted, more organized pages for school information, and content and photos updated easily for better communication with our community. The web address has not changed, and you are invited to browse the new site and check it out. ([www.stmarygilroy.org](http://www.stmarygilroy.org))
- **PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEES** – A Facilities Committee made up of parent volunteers was formed this past year to assist school administration in addressing current and future needs for the school buildings and grounds. A new Garden Committee also was formed with parent volunteers to create a vegetable garden that will enhance and supplement our science curriculum at all grade levels as well as provide fresh vegetables for St. Joseph's Family Center. The garden was made possible by a generous grant from the Gilroy Foundation to build a raised-bed garden for our school. These committees are an addition to the current group of parent advisory committees—Safety, Technology, Development, and Finance—and administration is grateful for the experience, talent and expertise that our parent volunteers bring to the school.
- **KINDER TEACHER CELEBRATES 50 TEACHING YEARS** – St. Mary School had the honor of celebrating the 50th teaching anniversary of Patti Littlejohn, kinder 4-year-old program teacher. After 39 years at El Roble Elementary School in Gilroy, she retired from public school teaching and came to SMS. Patti is an alumna of St. Mary School, and we truly have been blessed by her service!
- **BACK-TO-SCHOOL NIGHT TACO TRUCK** – SMS Men's Club and Mothers' Guild started a new tradition this past year by hosting a taco truck on junior high and elementary back-to-school nights. Before the formal events got started, parents enjoyed tacos and hospitality at the socials to reconnect with friends and meet new parents as the new school year started. Thanks to both parent groups for hosting this event and starting a new tradition at SMS!



- **SPRING CONCERT & ART OPEN HOUSE** – Throughout the year, SMS students learned to play and sing many new songs and created wonderful artwork under the guidance of our music, art and band instructors. To showcase our students' talents, we started a new event for parents and families to enjoy the culmination of the students' hard work. The beginning and advanced bands opened the concert with a few songs, followed by each class singing for the audience. After the concert, families viewed the beautiful artwork hung throughout the school that students completed this year. We are looking forward to this event becoming a tradition at SMS!
- **SAFETY DOOR** – Through a Refurbishment and Repair Grant from the Diocese of San Jose, SMS installed a new safety door in the lobby near the front office, which serves as an added safety feature, preventing access to the hallways and classrooms without restricting student movement. Ever mindful of the world in which we live, the door adds to other safety measures SMS has put into place over the past few years to ensure the continued safety of our students and staff.
- **BRYAN STOW FOUNDATION PRESENTATION** – In support of St. Mary School's goal to teach the "whole child," SMS is blessed to have a volunteer group of parents who run Project Cornerstone and Second Step, which give students the tools to deal with bullying or negative outside influences and teach positive peer interaction. To enhance the goals of those programs, SMS Mothers' Guild made a generous donation to the Bryan Stow Foundation to bring in an anti-bullying presentation for the students. Speaking as a survivor of a brutal attack at a 2011 Giants-Dodgers baseball game, Bryan Stow talked with students in kindergarten through 8th grade about what it means to be a bully, the effects of bullying, and how to recognize and prevent it.
- **GILROY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE** – To gain exposure for St. Mary School in the business community, SMS joined the Gilroy Chamber of Commerce this year. In addition to networking opportunities to spread the word about what SMS offers, the school has marketing and networking benefits through its membership, and during Catholic Schools Week, we hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate our membership.
- **2017 GILROY ART & WINE STROLL** – St. Mary School is getting out into the community more, and for the first time, participated with an information table in the annual Gilroy Art & Wine Stroll. Local wineries were featured in downtown businesses, and local artists were displayed. The good word about SMS is spreading, and we look forward to participating again in 2018!



## FACULTY FAREWELLS

At the end of the school year, we said farewell to Jon Sanchez and Kelly Ramirez who both retired. Jon served as the PE teacher and athletic director for 20 years, and Kelly came out of her first retirement to co-teach 4th grade for two years. We wish them well in this next chapter in their lives and thank them for their outstanding service to St. Mary School. We also said farewell to Melissa Remmick, 2nd grade teacher; John Kellett, music teacher; Patty Pipkin, 2nd grade and extended care aide, and yard duty supervisor; and Taylor Duarte, yard duty supervisor and extended care aide, as they move on to new opportunities. We will miss all of these talented people and appreciate everything they did for St. Mary School and wish them all the best!



# Thank You For Your Gifts!

St. Mary School was blessed this year to receive an abundance of gifts that greatly benefited student programs and the school. We gratefully thank our donors, sponsors and supporters for your generosity and look forward to your continued support.

- Our **8th Annual Walk-A-Thon** was a tremendous success due to the energetic efforts of students and faculty who walked a total of 7,729 laps or 734 miles! The generous proceeds will help purchase new playground equipment and bring after-school enrichment programs to the students.



- Our **Annual Fall and Spring Spaghetti Dinners** were again a remarkable success thanks to the support of the St. Mary School and Gilroy communities. With the funds raised at these events, SMS continued to offer a strong sports program in volleyball, basketball, track, and flag football for students in 5th through 8th grades.
- The generous gifts St. Mary School received through the **Annual Appeal** helped to close the gap between tuition costs and the cost of providing a Catholic education.
- This year, SMS threw an Old Hollywood-themed gala to celebrate the **30th Annual Blue & White Auction** at Kirigin

Cellars winery. Guests enjoyed a fun-filled, glamorous evening with cocktails, dinner, dancing, and silent and live auctions. The funds raised this year will replace the old play structure with a new, larger one that will provide excellent activity for students at recess and lunch. SMS is most grateful for our supporters of the largest fundraiser of the year!

- St. Mary School was the grateful recipient of four **Gilroy Foundation** grants to help fund a raised-bed garden for science, tuition assistance, technology, class projects and library needs. The SMS community appreciates the Foundation's continued support of the school and its mission!
- The **General Mills Box Tops for Education** program continued to pay off for St. Mary School! We are grateful for the support of friends and families who diligently clipped those little pink tops so SMS could receive funds to support the library to purchase new books and materials.
- SMS families and friends enjoyed dinner out at **Pieology Pizzeria** while at the same time helped raise funds for the library. Pieology graciously donated proceeds back to the school in support of the fundraiser.
- The **Annual Book Fair** held during parent/teacher conference week provided a wide range of books that students shopped to build their personal home libraries, while the proceeds from the event purchased new books for the school library. A win-win for all!



## KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH ST. MARY SCHOOL

As a member of our St. Mary School community, you have a standing invitation to join us at the many events we host through the year, or just to stop by and chat. We would love to hear from you, especially our alumni!

Help us to spread the word about our wonderful school and follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



Visit the website at [www.stmarygilroy.org](http://www.stmarygilroy.org) for school information.

The annual newsletter is published once a year for alumni, donors, friends, parents and sponsors of St. Mary School. Contact Denise Garibaldi, Development & Marketing Director, at [dgaribaldi@dsj.org](mailto:dgaribaldi@dsj.org) or (408) 842-2827 for additional copies of the newsletter or find it on the SMS website at [www.stmarygilroy.org](http://www.stmarygilroy.org).

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## COMING UP IN 2017-2018

September 21 . . . . .	9th Annual Walk-a-Thon
October 6 . . . . .	Fall Spaghetti Dinner
November 1 . . . . .	Fall Open House for Prospective Families
December 20 . . . . .	Advent Program
January 28 . . . . .	Catholic Schools Week Family Mass
January 29 . . . . .	Catholic Schools Week
January 30 . . . . .	Catholic Schools Week Open House for Prospective Families
February 2 . . . . .	20th Annual Grandparents Day Mass & Brunch
March 3 . . . . .	8th Annual Rummage Sale
March 19 . . . . .	St. Joseph Day Mass & Brunch (honoring SMS current and past fathers)
March 21 . . . . .	Spring Open House for Prospective Families
March 29 . . . . .	Lenten Passion Play
March TBD . . . . .	31st Annual Blue & White Auction
April 25 . . . . .	SMS Class of 2014 Reunion
May 4 . . . . .	Spring Spaghetti Dinner
May 11 . . . . .	Mothers' Day Prayer Service & Brunch (honoring SMS current and past mothers)
May 23 . . . . .	Spring Concert & Art Open House
June 1 . . . . .	8th Grade Baccalaureate Mass & Graduation