Dear Friends,

Praised be Jesus Christ!

As we enter the fall season, it is not only the weather and length of the days that are changing here at St. Mary Parish and School. A new academic year has begun, bringing with it new beginnings, new faces, and new opportunities for growth in faith and community.

A few weeks ago, we welcomed our faculty and staff back to campus to prepare for the year ahead. It was a fruitful week of reconnecting, welcoming new members, and preparing our hearts for the mission entrusted to us. Parish and school staff also gathered for an all-staff retreat centered on this year's school theme: "Rooted in Christ." It was a beautiful opportunity to reflect, pray, and remember that everything we do must ultimately flow from our relationship with Jesus. It is always a gift when our parish and school communities can come together, especially in prayer.

Our students have now returned, and classes are underway. Please pray for our students, parents, faculty, and staff—that the Lord may bless them with wisdom, patience, joy, and a deeper love for Christ throughout the coming year. Catholic education is so important, not only for the life of the Church but also for the good of our society. I am deeply grateful for the sacrifices and generosity of so many who support our school and the mission of Catholic education.

I am also very grateful for Jeff Kacala and his ministry to our parish for nearly a decade. Jeff will retire in October and looks forward to spending more time with his wife, Laura, and their grandchildren, as well as continuing his ministry with Encounter Ministries. On a personal level, I am especially grateful for the way Jeff helped me transition to St. Mary and learn how to be a first-time pastor. His wisdom, encouragement, and friendship have been a tremendous gift. While we will certainly miss him, we are also excited to see where the Lord is leading him. Jeff, thank you for all you have done—and will continue to do—for our parish and the Church!

Over the summer, we prayerfully discerned Jeff's successor through a number of interviews. I am happy to share that we believe the Holy Spirit has led us to the right person. On August 31, Sam Rasp began serving as our new Director of Discipleship. Sam brings experience in both parish and archdiocesan ministry and served for five years as a FOCCUS missionary. He is a husband and father and a man on fire with faith. I am excited for him to get to know our parish family and to see how the Lord will work through his ministry.

As we begin this new school year and experience these transitions, I humbly ask you to pray with me. Let us first give thanks, for we have much for which to be grateful. Let us also pray for the gift of wisdom—that the Holy Spirit may guide our school, our parish, our families, and each of us ever more deeply into the heart of Christ.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Rev. Aaron R. Laskiewicz

Pastor