



December 3, 2020

Feast of Saint Francis Xavier

Dear Friends,

I hope this message finds you and your family in good health.

I now share our fifth '*Open Letter to Friends and Supporters*' as this challenging season persists. I first wrote in early April, during Holy Week, anticipating school disruptions but not knowing their true dimensions. My most recent letter was sent in September, our third week back on campus, pleased that, despite COVID restrictions, students were learning again successfully, in-person. Now in the Advent season, we are proud to have provided thirteen weeks of in-person education, yet concerned with the rising community infection rates and the effects felt in the lives of our students, families, and staff members. The waters have not ebbed and may be rising.

As of this writing, there have been six instances of COVID-positive infection amongst immediate school community members, and all were thought to have been contracted outside of school. Students and staff members have maintained well mask-wearing and other measures, which has enabled this level of success. Our strong desire is to remain "open" in-person all year, and we will take every reasonable step to accomplish this. With God's grace and the cooperation of students and staff, we'll make it together.

You're not surprised to learn that school has been different this year. COVID restrictions have forced adjustments and creative responses in all key areas of school life.

Academics

Thanks to dedicated teachers and cooperative students, teaching and learning have been preserved nearly fully during the pandemic. Students are in-person each day or remote on the same full-time schedule due to sickness or quarantine. While it's uphill sledding at times, I predict that students will come out of this with significant gains compared to other learning modes.

Sacramental Life and Faith Formation

Most fundamental to our mission is drawing students into an encounter with the living God through Christ Jesus. Typically, this is done through joyful retreats, all-school Holy Masses, prayer services, daily Theology instruction, and Christian service opportunities. COVID-restrictions have forced modifications to worship, service, and retreat activities. Nonetheless, we are providing Holy Mass in smaller groups and more "distanced" service and retreat options. Ultimately, God will use the witness and relationships modeled every day in school for His holy purposes.

Activities

From March 2020 to the Fall, group activities were a no-go. Since returning in-person, with proper modifications, select fall athletics, old-time radio dramas, and certain clubs and activities have resumed. Their return has provided a spark for students, and while others have remained off the table, for now, we are maximizing what can be done to revitalize students' experiences.

Enrollment and Finances

Due to the school's strong reputation and in-person learning commitment, the school has experienced enrollment growth for the 2020-2021 school year. Many of those students are 'coming home,' having attended Catholic schools in the past. Additionally, retaining current families has been a top priority since March, and for this reason, the school's "Keeping the Faith" Fund awarded \$249,000 in additional emergency financial aid. Taken together, the enrollment gains and strong retention have bolstered the school's financial outlook.

However, we face a challenging operational budget picture this current year. Unbudgeted, increased costs due to in-person learning in the COVID era (e.g., \$25,000 in plexiglass for our cafeterias, doubled cleaning costs to account for 3x daily sanitization, or up to \$80,000 in PPE expenses) coupled with potentially decreased fundraising event income (i.e., no in-person auction) will demand increased annual giving and "the extra mile" from our most generous donors.

In conclusion, we know that "God provides," and we realize that school life is just one aspect of this global challenge. It is distinctly possible that this entire school year will remain COVID-restricted. While no one wishes for this, we will extend, adjust, and continue our current approach that values structure, connections, and the maximization of school life, despite constraints. Through faith, we know that "all will be well." I hope that you are, too.

Please contact me with your comments or questions. If there is anything we can

do for you or yours, let me know directly.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher Keavy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Christopher Keavy
President