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J.M.J.A.

Dear Parents and Friends of St. James,

January 10, 2024

Monday's Feast of the Baptism of the Lord ushered in a new season of the liturgical year which we call Ordinary Time. Though we may miss the comfort and sense of home which the Christmas season provides, there is an excitement and even an adventure in the thirty-four weeks of Ordinary Time if we live them with Christ.



On the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the Holy Spirit descends from Heaven and rests on Jesus, crowning Him the royal heir of David and beloved Son of God the Father. This is His coronation day! Jesus now begins His kingly mission to the nations! Our King is on campaign to love, serve, and sacrifice Himself for all peoples and He invites us to join him. Whatever our daily tasks in life, Jesus desires to be right there with us to lead the way and to reign in love. I believe Jesus has been right there with us at St. James and I pray that He lead, guide, and reign during this new season and new semester of 2024.

In the past two-and-one-half years, we have made some significant curriculum changes at St. James School. These changes were directly in keeping with Bishop Conley's repeated call for the revitalization of our diocesan Catholic schools. In his address to the teachers of the Diocese this past October 2023, Bishop Conley

shared, "I am firmly convinced that today we find ourselves at a pivotal moment, a time of true renewal of Catholic education ..."

Bishop Conley cited some troubling statistics regarding youth and education in Nebraska and our country. He declared,

"... young people are experiencing anxiety, depression, and even suicidal ideation at an alarming rate. At a time when we should be celebrating the wonder of this progress and advancement of such an incredible wealth of technological advancement, and the wonderful possibilities for the future, test scores of students in the western world continue to decline. Just last week it was reported in the Lincoln Journal Star that the Nebraska Department of Education released the results of ACT test scores for students across the state that measures college readiness in English, reading, math and science. Nebraska students were below the national average in all those subjects. This was part of a larger national report that showed high school students' scores on the ACT college admissions test have dropped to their lowest level in more than three decades."

While recognizing multiple factors involved, Bishop Conley believed that part of the reason for this educational demise was,

"... the fact that young people and their teachers are no longer experiencing the joy and wonder of learning. And I would submit to you that the reason for this is because students are no longer learning the meaning of things. They are not learning how everything fits together as a whole and gives meaning to reality and, ultimately, gives meaning and purpose to their lives. It's like our students have been given a ten-thousand-piece jigsaw puzzle, without the picture on the box that shows them how all the pieces fit together. They have lost the sense of the whole or the ultimate end of what they are learning."

It has now been two-and one-half years since we at St. James took our first steps in fashioning an education that would focus on “the meaning of things” throughout the whole curriculum. It is our desire to have a school where joy and excitement in learning is the norm for both students and teachers. We want to help our students see the connection of everything in the universe and how all creation points to God. We want to soak our students in truth, beauty, and goodness. We want them to know the ultimate meaning of life and their own glorious destiny and purpose as sons and daughters of God.

What concrete steps have we taken and how has this been received by teachers and children at St. James? What are our test scores showing? At our upcoming SFA meeting on Tuesday, January 16, I would like to give you a report on what we have done so far, where we are succeeding, and where we need to improve. We also plan to have you experience some lessons with our St. James teachers! Please join us at 6:30 pm. Babysitting will be provided.

Thank you for joining and helping us (we need you!) as we do our best to follow the lead of Christ our King in the mission of educating our children in the Catholic tradition during these glorious weeks of Ordinary Time!

In the Heart of Christ the King,

*Sister Mary Alma, C.K.*  
Sister Mary Alma, C.K.



**Parent Involvement at St. James:** Please find the enclosed parent volunteer form to see how you can support St. James School. We love to partner with you in making St. James the best school it can be!

**SFA Meeting:** You and your children are invited to join us for a School Family Meeting this Tuesday, January 16 at 6:30 pm. We will take a look at our educational renewal during the first half of the meeting. During the second half, parents together with their children will experience a lesson taught by our teachers! You get to choose the lesson.

**School Closings:** St. James School will follow the Crete Public Schools for school closings and late start days due to dangerous weather conditions. Call School Closing (402) 826-7890 or, in Spanish, School Closing: (402) 826-7888. If the message says that Crete Public Schools are closed or have a late start due to inclement weather, know that the same is true for St. James School. Our announcement will also be on KLKN-TV Channel 8 and KOLN.KGIN TV Channel 10/11.

**Coming Home Today:** Parent volunteer form

**Upcoming Dates:**

Tuesday, January 16	6:30 pm SFA Meeting
Sunday, January 28 – Feb. 2	Catholic Schools Week
February 7	Kindergarten Preview 5:00 pm
February 13	Valentine’s Day celebrated at St. James
February 14	Ash Wednesday – the beginning of Lent
February 20	First Holy Communion Parent Meeting 6:30 pm
February 24	First Penance 10:00 am
February 29	Parent-Teacher Conferences