

## School News

Earlier in the school year, the 8th graders worked on their interviewing skills. The finished piece would be a personal profile of Father John.

The students came up with their own questions. We then chose the best ones, set up a time with Father, and interviewed him. The session was filmed, so we watched it several times, stopping at spots so the 8th grade writers could get Father John's exact words.

Some of the questions were serious. Some were more lighthearted. (For example, one student wanted to know what Father John slept in. The class found out that no, Father does not sleep in his clerical clothing!)

We looked at examples of personal profiles and discussed what should be included. Just a person's words—put on paper—might be dull. Capturing facial expressions and body language make the subject come alive, so, as we listened, we also watched Father as we reviewed the film.

Even though this work was done in the fall, it seems fitting to share it now—now that Christmas is over and our gifts have been unwrapped and enjoyed. Father John is such a gift... in so many ways.

Here is one of the exemplary papers:

*"Everything in my life. It felt like it had all been driving towards this moment, and it was finally here. It was pretty awesome,"* was Fr. John's response when he was faced with one question: What was going through your mind during your first Mass? Our 8th grade class interviewed Father John for answers to many questions, all with one goal. We wanted to learn more about the priesthood.

When the question, "Did everyone support your decision to be a priest?" came up, Father took a moment to answer truthfully. With his head rested against the chalkboard, he said, *"Did I really wanna be a priest? I didn't have a lot of people to support me at that time (between college seminary and theology studies), so it would have been really easy for me just to walk away. But God somehow gave me the grace to make my call more serious and real. The decision became clear. That is what I wanted to do, what I was called to do, so that's what I did."*

Fr. John also told us a few stories about himself. One of those stories was about his 30-day silent retreat. He explained that during that retreat, the participants went to Mass, prayed for 4 hours, then were free to do whatever. Father said, *"Most days I walked across the river from Omaha to Iowa, so I spent most days in 2 states."* When asked why he walked across the river he replied, *"It was right there, so why not?"* We then proceeded to ask how he felt after that retreat. *"Those experiences really helped me commit to the priesthood and Christ, more deeply than before,"* was his answer.

Another story he shared was about his first job. He was a stock person at Handyman True Value on Lindbergh. He said it was his "best job ever." He got to drive a forklift and fill propane tanks. He said one day he was filling up a propane tank for someone. The man had forgotten to put his van in park, so it slowly started rolling down the hill towards the Lindbergh intersection, which is always busy. Father said he told the man and the guy yelled and dived into the driver's seat to stop the car. Fr. John said that that was the story about how he almost witnessed a bad car crash on Lindbergh.

This next story is more about his calling. He told us that he was given the opportunity by the Archbishop to go back to school and get more degrees, and to move past parish life. This was what happened to make that decision: *"I was on a Communion call. I was sitting in the driveway of that person's house, when I was suddenly struck with the Lord's presence. I immediately knew God was with me, and that he wanted me to stay in parish work. So that's what I told the Archbishop, and a few months later, I was asked to be a pastor for the first time."*

One question really caught him off guard. "Are the sacrifices worth it?" He closed his eyes and pursed his lips, and after about 30 seconds, he said, *"Are the sacrifices worth it? I think the answer would be the same if you asked your parents that. It's hard. When things get rough, it is hard to make those sacrifices. But is it worth it? Yes, I believe that it is worth it."* That was truly a deep answer, as he stated, to a "very deep" question.

Fr. John chose parish life, when he could've moved on to do many other great things, although he says that being a pastor isn't always easy. He basically told us that he didn't know what he was doing half the time. But he also said, "That's what they make YouTube videos for, right?" He later clarified his statement, saying, "When I became a pastor (and still sometimes as well), there really is not a manual of how to do it so I am not sure of what to do. A lot of thought, prayer, and conversation goes into being a pastor and a priest and I am grateful that so many support me to do what I do."

So, what we've all learned is that being a priest isn't easy. Priests have to make big sacrifices for their faith. It's truly a hard call to follow, but we must be thankful for the men who choose to listen and make the most of their calling. Fr. John definitely proved to us that it isn't easy, but he did say it is worth it in the end.

—-Claire Fuhr

### *School Open House*

Please start spreading the word for our School Open House, which will be on Sunday, January 29.

Thanks to the Archdiocesan announcement in November, we are looking to open our school for the 2023-2024 academic year. This week, we announced our tuition for the coming year. These revised tuition rates will be used to help fund a \$5,000 pay raise for our faculty and staff, which is well-deserved and long overdue.

We are hopeful to have sufficient enrollment by the end of February to offer teacher contracts, and we are optimistic for a positive faculty response to ensure that our school will be open for the 2023-2024 academic year.

Like all Archdiocesan schools, while we cannot say much about the following years, we are grateful to God for the opportunity to have a school for the next school year. We ask for your continued vocal and financial support to make this vision a reality.



**SAINT RAPHAEL  
THE ARCHANGEL**  
CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
PRE K - 8TH GRADE

**Open House**  
Sunday, January 29 | 11am-2pm

*Formed in faith, Prepared for life*

6000 Jamieson Avenue | sraschool.org  
(314) 352-9474

## FR. JOHN'S DIGITAL QUILL FOR SPIRITUAL MUSINGS AND PARISH NEWS

### *January Offerings*

In this new year, I am happy to announce that we will offer some new parish programs, and return some opportunities that have unfortunately lapsed over the last few months.

### Prayer Groups

Our parish prayer groups will meet this week! I will meet with my group on Monday, January 16, at 2:00pm in the cry room. Pam Hager will meet with her group on January 17, at 9:30am. Deacon Bob is still determining the start time for his group.

Our plan right now is that the groups will meet every two weeks until Lent, when they will start meeting each week.

Please know that, although these groups were formed in Advent, they are still open and available to everyone!

### "Bother Father"

Our first "Bother Father" for 2023 occurs this week on January 17, from 3:00-5:00pm. There will be a second session on January 24, from 9:00-11:00am.

A helpful suggestion was to create a Signup Genius so people can sign up for a slot. The Genius was sent out this past Wednesday. If you would like help signing up, please contact the parish office.

As a reminder, these sessions are times when people are able to visit me to discuss anything going on in their lives, to ask questions of faith or spirituality, or to raise questions or concerns about the parish or All Things New.

### Parish Rosary Program

This is a very simple offering...each week people commit to praying a decade or more of the Rosary. We will unite in praying for the intentions of our parish, but in particular each week, I will propose an intention.

There are many reasons why the Rosary is needed now in our community:

- Our Lady has promised that the Rosary will bring peace to our world and to our communities.
- With the end of 2022, until May of 2023,

we are now in a bit of a holding pattern regarding All Things New. This is a way for us to continue to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide this process until the data are crunched and the final recommendations are made.

- We can pray for the future of our school for next year and beyond.
- We can pray for an increase of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, so needed in this time.
- We can pray for the strengthening of Christian family life.
- We can pray that individuals and families who have fallen away from the Church will return.

These are just a few of the many reasons why we need this program right now.

Last week, we received intention cards for 18 Rosaries to be prayed each week for the intention listed in the bulletin.

This first week, our prayer intention will be for the sick of our community.

Would you like to pray with us and see that number of Rosaries increase? If so, please fill out this intention card and return it in the Offertory.

I will see you online or in church! - Fr. John #SRAstrong

I commit to participating in the Parish Rosary Program

(Name Optional)

I will pray...

\_\_\_\_\_ Decade(s)

\_\_\_\_\_ Rosary(ies)

Every:

\_\_\_\_\_ Day

\_\_\_\_\_ Week