

Dear Parents,

This week, I had the pleasure of attending the Arlington Diocese Vocations Mass with our 8th grade class. This annual Mass is celebrated by Bishop Loverde for the 8th grade Catholic school students across the diocese. It is a special Mass during which 8th graders pray that God will speak to them about their particular vocation in life, and that their ears will be open to hear His call for their lives. The Bishop intercedes, in particular, for these students as they begin to pray about and contemplate whether God is calling them to be married, single, or perhaps, being called to the religious life as a priest, sister or brother. He emphasized that the call to religious life is a particular call to live completely for Christ and His people. The Bishop stated that he knows some 8th graders are being called to the religious life, but sometimes no one is listening. He asked the students to pray and to listen for God's call for their lives as they will be most happy by following His holy will.

Our 8th graders were very reverent, respectful and prayerful during the Mass. I let them know how proud I was of them and that I prayed for each one of them, by name, during that Mass. My prayer for them is that they will open their hearts to hear God's call for their lives and that they will follow His will. As a school, we pray a vocations prayer each morning for this purpose. Let us all join together in praying that our children will pray to God, listen for His voice and answer his call for their lives.

Last Saturday, our band students performed at the annual Diocesan Band Festival. Even with the challenge of fewer rehearsals (due to inclement weather and a family emergency for our band director), the band earned a rating of "Superior!" The original rating that came down from the judges was the lower rating of "Excellent." However, Ms. Fitzpatrick appealed the score because the snare drum (provided by Bishop Ireton, where the competition took place) broke during their performance. Way to go to the mat for your students, Ms. Fitzpatrick! Extra graces are in order for Ms. Fitzpatrick as her father passed away last Friday morning (she still came to teach band that very day, in preparation for the festival) Even after the loss of her father, she still led 5 different Catholic school bands in Saturday's band festival. I find that quite heroic! When I asked her how she could do that, she told me she did not want to disappoint the kids who had been working so hard. May God bless Ms. Fitzpatrick and her family during this time of grief.

On Monday, the teachers will be participating in a full day of professional development. Preschool and extended day personnel will participate in Diocesan sessions particular to their programs. The other teachers will be here at Saint Ann where we will spend time assessing the effectiveness of current programs we are using (Reading A to Z, Handwriting without Tears, LabLearner, etc.). We will discuss whether or not we see a need for any changes, for updating textbooks or for increased training in particular areas.

In particular, we will look at whether or not these programs support our [Mission and Philosophy](#) as we strive to help our students develop into well-rounded individuals who love Christ and His Church as well as one another.

I pray you enjoy your 3 day weekend and I ask for your prayers that our Professional Development Day is fruitful in enhancing what we offer our students and families at Saint Ann Catholic School.

In Christ,

Mary Therrell