



St. Francis Central Coast Catholic High School

Principal's Newsletter

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Keith B. Mathews, President and Principal

To SFCCCHS families:

In June, I travelled with my family to Croatia and discovered why the Dalmatian Coast is the favorite among travel magazines these days. The Adriatic is simply stunning, and the romantic villages that dot its shores are at once steeped in history and innovative in re-constructing the country after the war of a decade ago.

Particularly memorable were three visits we made to the village of Cilipi, and to the Catholic church there, St. Nicholas. Ravaged by the war, St. Nicholas has been fully restored and now serves as the focus of a fete of cultural dancing and handiwork each Sunday designed to entertain tourists and to celebrate the Croatian culture. What I remember most was the behavior of the teens with whom we celebrated Mass there in Cilipi.

Two things struck me about how the young comported themselves there: first, during the Mass, the teenagers were certainly reverent, snapping to silence and dedicated observance at critical moments of the Mass, as in the Eucharistic prayer. But that reverence was also marked by a relaxed, communal atmosphere that included just a bit of conversation during the Mass, as well as smiles and exchanges that showed the kids to be absolutely comfortable in their church. When late arrivals joined their friends, all near them took the time to speak, to share a hearty welcome—rather than a pained, silent nodding of the head as someone slips tardily into his seat.

None of it was distracting or particularly noisy; it appeared that I was the only one taking notice of what was an oddity to me. And no one was disturbed as the young men near me would briefly make a comment, completely relevant, not at all inappropriate, about what the celebrant just said during his homily.

Second, when it came time for the distribution of the Holy Eucharist, children and teens rushed to the altar to be first. They weren't bullish or rude about it; no one was knocked over or shoved aside. But none of them waited for a line to form, either. Each youngster sidled up as close as he or she could to the celebrant; each looked genuinely anxious to receive the Lord's supper, and I found their enthusiasm stimulating, refreshing, and innocent. After receiving the host, each of them marched directly to a side of the altar, knelt and prayed for a fairly lengthy amount of time, then returned to his/her seat, amid just a slight bit of lighthearted banter about what they might do later in the day, or about the soccer game last night.

I liked it. And I liked it because it suggested such an ease, and an easiness, in a holy place. And I thought then that, really, shouldn't we, His most beloved of creations, feel at ease in His presence?

Now, don't get me wrong: none of this authorizes St. Francis students to chat their way through our celebrations that we undertake in the gym. It isn't particularly easy to create a reverent atmosphere seated in the bleachers, and so each student must do what he or she can to promote a pastoral setting amid basketball goals. But on the other hand, we ought to aspire to feel as it appeared to me those kids felt in St. Nicholas: absolutely sure about themselves, relaxed and welcomed into what feels like their home.

That notion of being at home, of course, is one of the four pillars foundational to the vision articulated by Don Bosco of a haven for youth: home, church, school, and playground. Last week, Mr. John Marheineke of our Theology Department and I attended a week-long session at Don Bosco Hall in Berkeley that brought us together with leaders from various Salesian works in the Western Province. This is the second summer of a program called SLIM—Salesian Leadership in Ministry, a two-year endeavor to educate more fully to the maintenance of Salesian identity and to articulate and to

address the challenges the church faces as it transitions to increased lay leadership in the 21st century. Sprinkled throughout the week were presentations on the history and vision of St. John Bosco; just as happened last summer, I came away with a renewed zeal for the educational process as articulated by Don Bosco and an ever-increasing admiration for the man. He was, indeed, a visionary about institutions that mean to serve youth.

What it means to be a Salesian can be described variously, and a fuller explication of Salesianity in a high school setting is undertaken with regularity in this publication and in various meetings I attend throughout the year. This summer, however, I have been particularly drawn to this characterization, offered by a presenter at SLIM: Salesian works display an abiding affinity for the young and their concerns.

That articulation linked with my experience in Cilipi. The Mass at St. Nicholas was highlighted by a welcoming attitude to the natural inclinations of teens that revealed an affinity for youth that is to be the hallmark of Salesian works.

Certainly, all schools are—or should be-- so highlighted; but Salesians, by intentional design, mean to measure their works by the degree to which they are in touch with the concerns and interests of youth and the degree to which they respond with loving care to the challenges faced by young people. And so it is that, to a greater degree than in some other settings, we gear all that we do to the educational mission of being fully present to our students in their journey towards adulthood.

In the middle of the 19th century, St. John Bosco observed, when talking about what makes a successful educator, that it was not enough that one loved one's students; the students must know they are loved. It should be noted that decades of educational research during the late 20th century reveals that the number one factor in student success, more than school funding, demographics, or other indices of differences in schools, is this: whether the students believe their teachers care about them. It is my observation that what highlights St. Francis is the unique joy that enriches our school days. It is at once trite and true: students like it here, and they like their teachers. Most significantly, students know their teachers like them. By personal experiences, by countless anecdotes, and by objective survey, we know that our students see the genuine, abiding, personal-yet-professional fondness we have for them.

A contemporary college prep high school needs a focus on academic achievement; and so it is that so much of what we do here is concerned with classroom performance, test scores, and the like. Similarly, a full-fledged high school must undertake a wide array of extracurricular offerings for the full development of its students; thus do we place such a priority on activities that build the social community here at St. Francis. But our self-measurements, as a Salesian school, must begin with the extent to which we accompany with heartfelt concern the young entrusted to our care.

Welcome to the Class of 2012 and their families: The families of incoming freshmen were included in the mailing of May's newsletter; but this newsletter marks the first of your freshman academic year and the beginning of an exciting and growth-filled four years as a Shark! A frosh class of 55 students swells the ranks of the school to a total student population of 257.

Missing Documents: Some students have not submitted forms required for their attendance at St. Francis. If that is the case for your student, it is critical that this be addressed prior to the beginning of classes. ***Please note: your student may not attend classes until each of these forms has been submitted.*** Beginning August 20, 2008, any student whose file continues to lack these forms will be required to sit in the main office, not attending classes, until the forms are submitted. Please help us with this critical detail of your student's attendance.

Please see the attachment related to this announcement.

Frosh Orientation: All incoming freshmen are required to attend Freshman Orientation, scheduled for Monday, August 18, 2008, from 3 PM until 8 PM. Freshman should report to campus by 2:55 and should **be in complete daily**

uniform. Bring your academic schedule, as one of the activities will be to practice moving from period to period throughout a simulated day.

At least one parent/guardian of each incoming freshman should attend the latter portion of Freshman Orientation. Your student's success at St. Francis will be more likely the more informed you are about the school, and the evening session is designed to educate parents and students to the school's expectations. **Parents/guardians should arrive by 5:30 PM and plan to stay until approximately 8:00 PM.** A modest dinner meal will be provided by the St. Francis Association to all parents and students prior to a presentation by the administration.

Reminder: First Day of School: Classes begin for all students on Wednesday, August 20, 2008. The precise schedule is included in the enclosed flyer. The day will begin at 7:50 with home room. Friday, August 22, 2008, will also have the same special schedule for the year's first rally.

Please see the attachment related to this announcement.

Eucharist on Campus: The Salesian community of Our Lady Help of Christians has graciously agreed to undertake Mass once a week on campus this year. Every Tuesday morning, the 7 AM Mass will be celebrated in room B4, instead of in the church across the street. Students and campus groups will be encouraged to attend, and all parents, staff members, parishioners, and others from the wider St. Francis family are welcome to join us.

We Need All the Prayer We Can Get: Once again this year, a group of SFCC parents will come together to pray the rosary each week. The group meets in the gym every Friday morning at 7:45 for prayer and reflection. All are welcome to join the group. Questions may be directed to Valjean Albright (831.722.3141) or Christina Gibbs (831.475.6129).

Back-to-School Night: Parents are urged to join us on Tuesday evening, August 26, 2008, at 6:30 PM, for Back-to-School Night. This is an opportunity for you to meet each of your student's teachers. You'll receive a class schedule for your student in the general assembly in the gym that begins the evening. **Please note:** the evening is designed for parents; students should not attend.

Book Ordering: Remember that textbooks for SFCC courses are available at varsitybooks.com, the official provider for the school. Also be reminded that you may purchase books anywhere you see fit, so long as the ISBN number matches that required for the course.

Senior Retreat Opportunity: Kairos: Once again this year, seniors will be invited to participate in *Kairos*, a three-day retreat experience. The *Kairos* program is undertaken at many Catholic high schools throughout California and the nation, and it is pivotal in a senior's spiritual and personal development.

Because the retreat involves three days and two nights away from campus, it is not mandatory; however, we strongly urge every senior to set time aside in his/her schedule to attend. The dates have been set: Sunday through Tuesday, December 7-9, 2008. The retreat will begin around noon on Sunday and conclude on Tuesday early evening. Seniors attending the retreat will miss classes on Monday and Tuesday; those not attending will be required to attend school, as usual.

The retreat will be held at Monte Toyon Retreat Center in Aptos. Specifics about costs, transportation, and other matters will be articulated in senior theology classes. Note that lodging at Monte Toyon is limited; therefore, enrollment in the *Kairos* retreat will be made on a first come, first-served basis.

Oh—*Kairos* is an ancient Greek word meaning “divine time,” as opposed to *kronos*, “human time.”

Calendar: Included in the mailing of May, 2008, was a complete month-by-month calendar for the school year. This document includes much of the information necessary for the student and family to keep track of the academic schedule on a daily basis. Please work with your student to monitor which daily schedule is in effect each day, as well as any uniform requirements for each day. The calendar is also posted on the school's website and may be downloaded as needed. Monthly calendars are also posted throughout the campus to assist students in noting the next day's schedule.

Checking Grades on Edline: The school contracts to provide students and their families with the on-line opportunity to regularly review grade performance. Teachers are required to update their grade records twice a month, and parents and students can review those grades by logging on to the link on the school's website. Returning families that have activated Edline accounts will continue using the user name and password created last year. Incoming freshmen will be provided with instructions and an activation code for using Edline at Frosh Orientation. Call Ms. Lilia Reyes, SFCC Registrar (ext. 200), with questions or problems.

SFA Largesse: Each of you, as a parent of an SFCC student, is a member of the St. Francis Association, the parent group that assists the school with fundraising activities and that serves as a social coordinating agency for school parents. The single largest activity of the SFA is the annual St. Francis Festival, held on the last Sunday in April. As a result of the funds generated from SFA efforts, the following items have been recently underwritten entirely by the SFA: (1) significant improvements to be undertaken for the main office, including a new roof; new exterior doors; remodeling of the countertop at the receptionist's station; repair and replacement of aging portions of the decking; (2) the dinner provided to incoming freshmen and their parents at Frosh Orientation; (3) additional message boards to be installed near the main office and on the Salatich Science Building; (4) refinishing of the gymnasium floor; (5) refinishing of permanent, wooden benches throughout the campus; (6) a sizable contribution to the operating budget of the school to maintain lower tuition rates for 2008-09. Thank you to you all for your efforts on behalf of the school.

SFA Monthly Meetings: The SFA holds general meetings open to all parents. Meetings will be held on campus in Room H23 at 6:30 PM on the following dates:

- Monday, August 25, 2008 (change from 8.11.08)
- Monday, September 8, 2008 (change from 9.15.08)
- Monday, October 20, 2008
- Monday, November 17, 2008
- Monday, December 15, 2008
- Monday, January 12, 2009
- Monday, February 9, 2008
- Monday, March 16, 2008
- Monday, April 20, 2009
- Monday, May 18, 2009

Revised Student-Family Handbook: The 2008-09 Student-Family Handbook is available to students and families by the following methods: (1) Each student will be provided with a Student Planner on the first day of school. Within this planner is the complete Student-Family Handbook. (2) The handbook may be viewed and downloaded from the school's website. (3) Complete copies of the handbook are available for review in the Main Office.

Two Changes in the School Uniforms: Students should note two important changes to uniform requirements: (1) this year, t-shirts worn underneath polo shirts or dress shirts may only be white in color—no colored t-shirts are allowed (see p. 33 of the Student-Family Handbook); (2) on non-uniform days and Shark Wear Days, students may not wear flip flops as footwear; shoe requirements are the same as on uniform days (cf. p. 36).

Summer Reading: Students are reminded that they will be tested on their summer reading selections during the first few days of school in August.

Important Clarification Regarding Law Pertaining to Provisional Drivers: The State of California limits the driving privileges of provisional drivers (drivers under the age of 18, or within the first year of their having a driver's license). Of importance to SFCC families is the provision that prohibits a student from driving other students under the age of 20.

For returning families, please note that this changes the understanding we have been working under for the past year. The confusion was caused by the DMV Driver's Handbook, which does not contain the complete language of the California vehicle code. The school's attorney has advised the school that the language of the vehicle code is clear: a provisional driver may not drive with anyone under the age of 20 in the car; a provisional driver may not, then, be the driver of a

carpool headed to school, or to a game or other school event, *except* when all the riders in the car below 20 years of age are his/her immediate family members.

It should also be noted that, the spirit of this law is consistent with the directive stated in the Student Family Handbook (page 17):

Students Driving with Students: SFCC students are not authorized to travel together with a student as a driver to a school event. The event supervisor must instruct each student that if he/she drives to or from the event, he/she may take no other student with him/her. Students may travel with adults authorized as volunteer drivers; they may not travel with students as drivers (other than themselves).

By a wide margin, teenage automobile accidents occur most often with groups of teenagers in the car. Because of this, and because of the law that prohibits it for provisional drivers, event moderators will never authorize team members, club members, etc., to ride together to a required event with a student driver. When they are functioning as a part of a directed activity (e.g., as a part of a team), students will be instructed not to travel together with a student driver.

For your information, the text of the relevant law can be found on the California DMV website (www.dmv.ca.gov).

Salesian Enrichment: Summer is a time for renewal and enrichment of our Salesian identity. Towards that end, staff and students attended the following this summer:

--**Salesian Leadership in Ministry:** Mr. John Marheineke and I attended a week-long session in Berkeley this July at Don Bosco Hall. This was part of a two-year program designed to engender a deeper awareness of our Salesian heritage and to articulate a process for insuring an ongoing Salesian identity in works that, in the future, will be staffed increasingly by lay ministers and less by ordained Salesians.

-- **Salesian Educational Seminar:** Two St. Francis staff members, Mr. Mark Nance and Ms. Tish Green, attended this annual week-long introduction to the Salesian paradigm for education and community formation held at Don Bosco Hall in Berkeley during June.

-- **Salesian Youth Leadership Conference:** Seven SFCC students— Austen Ebert, Nicolette Serpa, Nick Maitoza, Connor Kreeft, Brett Heier, Natasha Tapia, and Ashley Borba--accompanied Br. Tom Mass and Fr. Tho Bui of Campus Ministry on a week-long gathering of students from Salesian schools and parishes throughout the Western Province. The event was held at Camp St. Francis in Aptos and included training in the formation of a student-based campus ministry team, as well as more than a bit of beach-oriented fun.

Salesians Abroad Return Home: Twenty-four of this year's seniors spent 11 days in Italy during June on a whirlwind tour of religious, educational, and cultural highlights of Northern Italy and Rome. By all accounts, the trip was at once joyous and enriching. Thanks to Mr. Ron Cyzman and Mr. John Marheineke of our staff for accompanying the group and functioning as a staff presence on the trip.

Salesians Abroad for summer, 2009, is in the planning process. This year's juniors are invited to join the group on an excursion to Italy during June of 2009. All junior parents should have been contacted about planning and fundraising activities being undertaken this fall in support of the trip. If you're interested in the trip and need information, contact Vicki Delucchi, the parent who is heading up next summer's trip, at 475-1936.

Supplemental Student Accident Insurance: Enclosed is a flyer from Myers, Stevens & Toohy & Co., Inc., outlining additional insurance coverage that you may purchase for your student. This is entirely optional and meant to be a service available to our school families.

Please see the enclosure related to this announcement.