



St. Mary's Alumni Action News

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Spring 2011

Dear Parents or Guardians,

I am writing at this time with a feeling of special concern for you as parents or guardians who have entrusted your children to St Mary Star of the Sea school for their elementary education. I do so, fully aware that this letter bears bad news of a decision that will disappoint you, but could not be averted despite efforts to avoid it.

As you may know, the Diocese commissioned a task force to undertake a lengthy and comprehensive analysis of the vitality of all parochial schools. The members studied the number of students enrolled, the prospects for future enrollment, financial health of the schools, the changing demographics and other critical factors.

When those criteria were used to evaluate St Mary Star of the Sea School, the task force concluded that our school was vulnerable because of a dwindling enrollment - a consistent trend that has seen a loss of 50 students in the past five years, now at 213 students - and strained financial resources: the Diocese is no longer able to provide support to the school, nor does the parish have funds to subsidize it.

As a result of its findings, the task force recommended to Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio that the school close at the end of the academic year on June 30, 2011, and the Bishop has accepted the recommendation.

This is a painful decision for students, parents, guardians, administrators, faculty, staff and the many parishioners, now and in the past, who took great pride in the accomplishments of the school for more than a century. But the harsh reality made this decision necessary.

These are the difficult fiscal facts: at the time the task force analyzed St Mary Star of the Sea's financial viability, it had an outstanding debt of \$528,536; a number of families were unable to meet their tuition payments last year and a similar pattern is likely this year. In the 2009/10 school year, the school received over \$58,000 from the St Elizabeth Ann Seton Trust of the Diocese, but recorded a deficit of almost \$62,000. In the current school year, the trust fund provided \$63,000, yet the operating budget shows a deficit of over \$130,000, a devastating number.

It was increasingly clear that the school could not continue to provide a quality education with such drastic financial needs. I sincerely wish it were otherwise.

As for the future for your child's education in a Catholic school, be assured that the neighboring parochial schools on the Rockaway peninsula will have seats to accommodate your child next year and we will provide every assistance in the transfer process. You are invited to meet the principals of the three schools in our school auditorium on Wednesday, February 16 at 7 p.m. I hope you will take advantage of this opportunity.

In closing, please know of our tremendous gratitude for the professional leadership of our principal, Ms. Angela Brucia, and the dedicated service of her fine faculty and staff members. They have created and maintained a loving Christian and value-centered atmosphere in our school.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Rev. Msgr. John J. Bracken, PA
Administrator

Special points of interest:

- St. Mary's to close after 134 years
- Great turnout at 2010 Mass for Deceased Alumni
- 2010 Videos and slide-shows highlighted on Alumni web
- Popular "Big Raffle" returns for summer of 2011

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"Big Raffle" 2011

Yes, our cherished elementary school graduated its last class in June of 2011, but we remain steadfast in our commitment to Catholic Education in Far Rockaway. We must redirect our mission to creating steady and reliable revenue streams to fund a scholarship program that will enable "our" needy parish children to attend neighboring Catholic schools.

We need your support, now more than ever, for our annual big raffle drawing. Please see page 8 for more info on "redirecting the mission," and page 5 for this year's Big Raffle ticket order form.

Order you ticket today!



Report from the Principal's Office

Dear Alumni & Friends,

It is with great sadness and tremendous gratitude that I write this letter to you. It is still difficult to believe that, after 134 years, there will no longer be a St. Mary Star of the Sea School in Far Rockaway. However, due to the wonderful alumni, the history, memories and accomplishments of our school will last forever.

My sincere hope is that, although the school will be closed, the Alumni Association will continue to flourish. The connection that the graduates of our school have is a special gift. I tell so many people about the St. Mary's alumni. You really are the best!

Please keep us in your prayers. This is a very difficult time for us. The teachers and staff need to find jobs, the parents need to decide upon new schools for their children, and the students are dealing with the loss of a home and the prospect of a new, foreign place in September.

Personally, I am not saying "good-bye." I hope to keep in touch with you. I expect to see you at the Big Raffle drawing in September. Thank you for all your support, and may God bless you for all you have done for our school.

Fondly,
Angela Brucia
Principal



Alumni Spotlight



On April 28, 2010, the president of our alumni committee, Joseph G. Barden, was nominated to become a member of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. The Order is one of the oldest and most distinguished international orders of knighthood in the Roman Catholic Church. For centuries, the Order has been working actively to promote the Christian presence in the Holy Land, through the commitment of its members to support the institutions and facilities of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Mr. Barden was officially invested into the Order on Saturday, October 2, 2010, by Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan, at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Joe is a proud alumnus of St. Mary Star of the Sea School (Class of '69), Cathedral Prep in Elmhurst, and St. John's University in Jamaica.

A life-long parishioner of St. Mary Star of the Sea, Joe was called to service in the nonprofit housing sector by Msgr. James J. McKenna as executive director of Margert Community Corporation in 1987.

He presently serves on the boards of the Neighborhood Preservation Coalition of New York State, the Association for Energy Affordability (AEA), and the Community Partnership Development Corporation, a charitable corporation and affiliate of the NYC Housing Partnership Development Corporation.

Cathedral Preparatory Seminary 12th Annual Hall of Fame Dinner - Saturday, January 29, 2011



Msgr. Sean G. Ogle, former pastor of St. Mary's and founder of our alumni association, was inducted into the Cathedral Prep Hall of Fame last January!

He grew up in St. Joseph's Parish in Astoria, and is an alumnus of Cathedral Prep, Cathedral College in Douglaston and the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception in Huntington, Long Island.

Msgr. Ogle was ordained to the priesthood on May 14, 1977, served at several parishes throughout the diocese, and taught English, Latin and Speech at Cathedral Prep, where he also served as Dean of Students and Spiritual Director.

In 1995, Msgr. Ogle was named pastor of St. Mary Star of the Sea, and founded our alumni association within his first year of tenure. He was appointed an Episcopal Vicar in 2002, and presently serves as pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Astoria.

Our Reader's Corner

Mesdames Julia Waldron, Lillian M. Higgins & Angela Brucia,

I will make every effort to join you either at the School or at the beach club. I miss Far Rockaway and the remaining members of the class of 1942.

God bless the three of you for keeping the school alive and well, and I congratulate the Alumni Association for its heroic efforts toward that end.

Please say hello to anyone else who may remember me as well as those who received the excellent primary education that St. Mary's School gave me.

John Nammack, *Class of '42*

Dear Alumni Association,

I have been getting the alumni release since it started and have enjoyed reading about all my old school friends and classmates from the *Class of '42*.

Sadly, all those who have passed, too.

Although I am 81 years old now, seeing that photo of the Glee Club and Brother Leo brought me right back to the *Good Old Days*, along with a flood of wonderful memories. To my surprise and a few tears, I spotted my brother, Don, standing next to Bro. Leo. I almost shouted with joy it was such a thrill, and showed all my friends, even though they didn't have a clue! You made my day...thank you so much.

I'm making copies for his children (he had 7). I'm sure they will love it, as Don passed a few years ago. He was the *Class of '41* (I think). If you would care to put it in the "memoriam" section I would appreciate it.

I'm also sending a copy of my '43 graduation class, if you care to use it in a future issue. I got such a kick out of all those faces I saw in the "Glee Club" picture, that I'm sure many would have the same reaction to my class pic. And how many have a pic that old... Many years ago, and this was two classes together. At that time, they had let the brothers go because of financial reasons, and had mixed the two classes together. So one grade then came back for the "big graduation" in the Spring - that's why the class looks so large! I knew all of them, and some of us still keep in touch...

Please accept my small donation to your wonderful newsletter, and keep up the good work. It keeps me in touch with such wonderful memories!!!

Joyce Dye Whelen, *Class of '43*

Dear Alumni,

So excited and sad at the same time. Last year, I attended Stella Maris' Farewell Mass and Luncheon, and now it's St. Mary's. So many memories, I can't count. I've tried to tell them to my children, but they just can't imagine the wonderful time I had growing up in such a great neighborhood.

I'm so looking forward to seeing old friends again and getting to walk through the halls of St. Mary's one last time. Thank you for having this.

Mary Ellen Jordan-Muscarello, *Class of '71*

Dear Alumni Association,

Like so many graduates of St. Mary's, I felt unhappy over the school closing - it was such a part of my family's history. My Mom (*nee* Gertrude Verdon) and her sisters and brothers all attended St. Mary Star of the Sea, as did my Dad and his family.

I hope that my contribution* to the Alumni Association will be of some small assistance, and I wish you the best of luck in keeping it going!

Dorothy (Dolly) Kelly

IN MEMORIAM

In the brief time that has passed since our last newsletter was published, we have suffered the painful loss of the following alumni and faculty:

Adam Balzer '40

Arnold Basile '47

Barbara Brackley Dean '44

Richard Douglas '42

Donald Dye '41

Francis Kilgannon '48

John Lally '47

Paul Liegey '41

Lucy Gentile Lockhart '14

Rev. Aidan McMullen, S.J. '30

Kenneth W. Metzging '67

Rocco V. Moreo '35

Brother James Mullen, S.C. '41

William Murphy '51

Maureen Friel Peacock '59

James "Joe" Radigan '42

Charles "Bud" Rankin '57

John Rivara '28

John Snowber '35

Donald Woska '45

Mary Madden Whyte '49

Sr. Joseph Marguerite

1962-69

Sr. Mary Helenita

1950-58

Sr. Thomas Virginia

1955-56

Sr. Mary Helen

1939-42

Sr. Therese de Montfort

1956-61

***"May They Rest in Peace!
Amen."***

**Please remember SMSOS when
planning your estate.**

* Unless otherwise specified by the donor, all direct contributions are now dedicated to the St. Mary's Alumni Association Scholarship Fund (see back page for more info).

Alumni Mass 2010



St. Mary Star of the Sea Alumni Mass
Saturday, November 20, 2010

"Big Raffle" 2011

St. Mary's Alumni Association
Big Raffle Ticket

Grand Prize of \$ 10,000 !!!
Total Prize Money = \$ 15,000

Drawing: Sunday, September 11, 2011
Sun 'n Surf Beach Club, Atlantic Beach, LI

Lounge and Patio Area, 3:30 - 6:30 PM
Only 400 Tickets Will be Sold - Donation \$ 100

Each Ticket Admits TWO to the Drawing.

Fill out form below, tear off, and return to rectory with your check for \$ 100.00. Please make checks payable to:
St. Mary's Alumni Association. You will receive your ticket via US Postal service.

Mail to: St. Mary's Alumni Big Raffle
1920 New Haven Avenue
Far Rockaway, NY 11691

The Alumni Association has gone digital! You can now order your "Big Raffle" ticket online. It'll be quick, easy and SECURE! Please visit the link below...

<http://saintsmaryandgertrude.org/alumni.htm>
We accept PayPal and all major credit & debit cards.

Support Catholic Education

Name

Street Address

City State Zip

Telephone Email Address

Number of Tickets Requested: _____

Do you plan to attend the drawing? Yes ___ No ___ Will you bring a guest? Yes ___ No ___



Alumni Registration

Our alumni association has been working off a mailing list that dates back to the hugely successful school reunion held back in the mid 1990's. To maximize connectivity and operate effectively we MUST compile a new list of the most recent contact information of all our graduates and friends.

We encourage our readers to visit our new web presence and update your contact information via our simple, intuitive online registration form:

<http://saintsmaryandgertrude.org/alumniregistration.htm>

For those unable to go the web-based route, we ask that you complete the form below and mail it to: St. Mary's Alumni Association, 1920 New Haven Avenue, Far Rockaway, NY 11691.



Contact Information

Please fill out your contact information below.

Name

Prefix

First Name

Middle Name

Last Name

Suffix

Maiden Name

Please tell us your maiden name if applicable

Address (please include apartment or unit number!)*

City

State/Province

Zip/Postal

Country

Home Phone

Please enter your phone number as per applicable format for your location (area code, country code, etc.)

Work Phone

Email

Class of

Please enter the year (yyyy) you graduated.

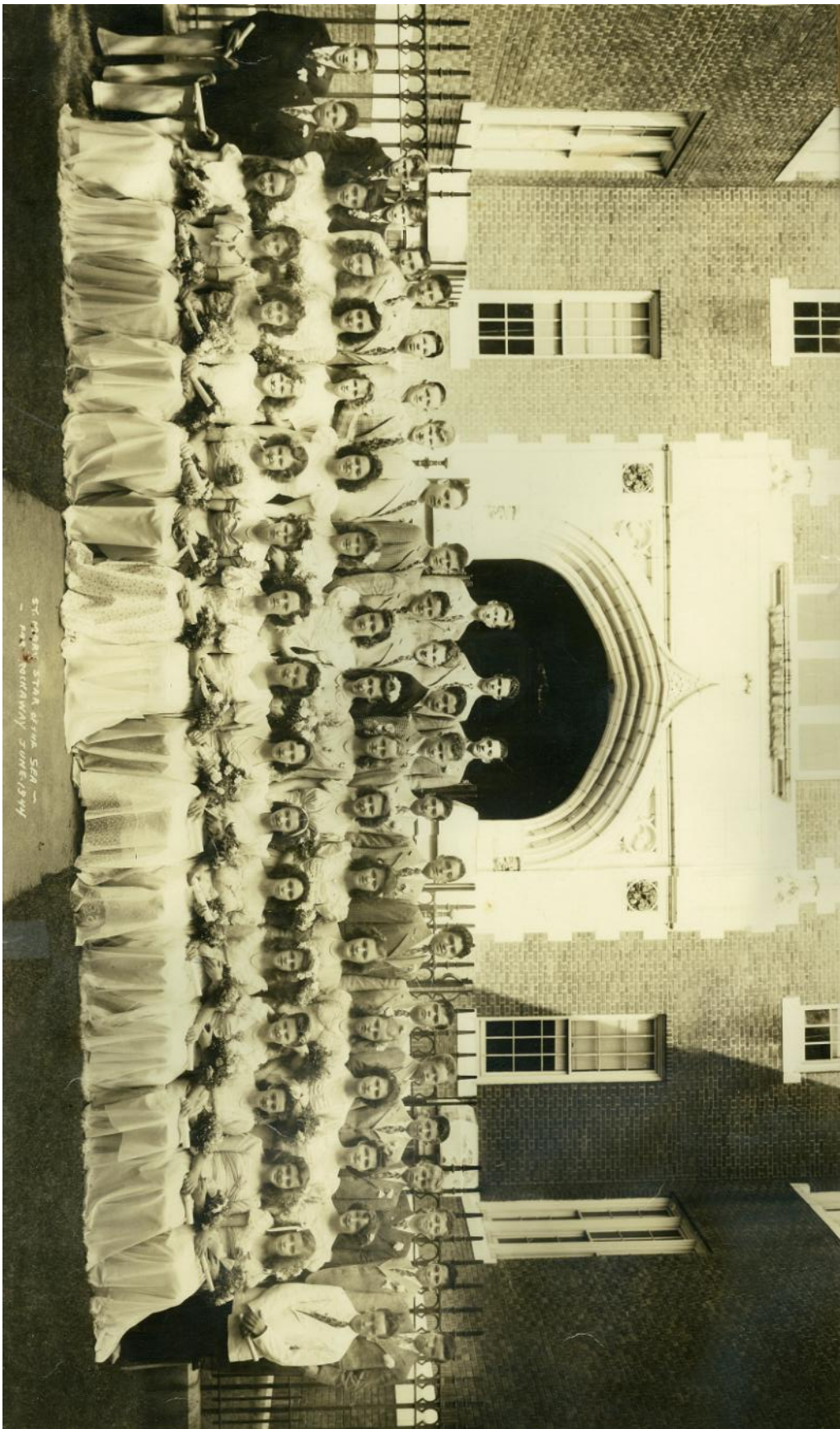
I wish my contact info be treated as (please check one) Public Private

Please indicate preferred method to stay connected (please check one) Home phone Work phone Email Newsletter

Comments

Please share your thoughts on our new web presence!

Memory Lane



Left to Right

- 1st Row: Unknown, Unknown, Caroline Cassese, Ruth Stankus, Marilyn Higgins, Kay Greenwood, Sally Strining, Peggy Pflum, Ann Hynes, Mary Liegey, Clare Roche, Maureen Carroll, Joan O'Brien, Fran Ryan, Marie Ayers, Eugenie Hanigan
- 2nd Row: Paul O'Brien, Val Picciello, Eileen O'Rourke, Unknown, Barbara Brackley, B. Parlo, Betty Cooney, Joan McGlone, Teresa Smith, Anna Young, Chris O'Brien, Margaret Greenwood, Helen Haggerty, Unknown, Leona Mignogna, Joan Vagnier, Phil Nolan
- 3rd Row: Jim Bradley, George McGrane, John Rizzo, Frank Hilovskiy, Brandon Beswick, Burke Carney, Thomas O'Connell, Frank Ferguson, Unknown, Ed Fleming, Jim McGurk, Mike Walsh, Martin Mullen, Joe DiMola, Jim Murello, Frank DiNapoli, George Dieringer, Unknown, Michael Hines, Unknown, Unknown, Billy Wright, Barney O'Neill
- 4th Row: Jack Wolfelich, Unknown, Danny Ayers



"Ave Maris Stella"

Rectory: 1920 New Haven Avenue
Far Rockaway, NY 11691

Phone: 718-327-1133
Fax: 718-327-3276

St. Mary's Alumni Association

Place Mailing Label Here

Please take a moment to update your contact info...

<http://saintsmaryandgertrude.org/alumniregistration.htm>

Re-directing the Mission



With the closing of our school in June of 2011, the alumni committee was forced to re-visit the mission of our Alumni Association. Up to this point, we have worked successfully to improve the physical condition of the school building and to provide, in some small way, financial support whenever possible.

While that was a daunting challenge - considering the age of the building and the never-ending financial pressures of running the school - the challenge that lies before us is greater still. How are we to support Catholic Education in the parish of our childhood with no school?

After much discussion and careful deliberation, the alumni committee has decided to continue its mission and re-direct its efforts to the establishment of the **St. Mary's Alumni Association Scholarship Fund**. Simply stated, all future revenue generated by our efforts (net of our minimal operating costs) shall be restricted to capitalizing a scholarship fund dedicated to assisting needy families of **St. Mary Star of the Sea and St. Gertrude Parish** in meeting the tuition costs for their children to attend neighboring Catholic grammar schools. In this way,

we not only continue to support Catholic Education in Far Rockaway, but also strengthen the schools in our surrounding parishes.

Annual fundraising, of course, will remain difficult, but the logistics of the scholarship fund will be easy: we will partner with the Diocese of Brooklyn **Futures in Education Foundation**. Through the **Be an Angel to a Student** program, students from financially struggling families receive a partial scholarship while parents remain responsible for the remainder of the tuition costs. As an Angel to our students, we will receive progress reports, holiday cards, drawings and letters from the students we support. The pastor and his director of religious education (DRE) will be responsible for selecting the students.

The foundation website indicates that some 2,600 students in our inner city parishes, *including St. Mary Star of the Sea and St. Gertrude*, are waiting for Angels. By becoming Angels, we can make a direct and lasting impact on the life of an at-risk youngster. **Every dollar we contribute goes directly toward the cost of tuition.** Angels contribute \$1,500 per year to a student's tuition and usually make a multi-year commitment. Gifts can also be made in honor or memory of a loved one, and we can specify the school or student we wish to assist.

All in all, we believe this to be a true win/win solution to addressing the challenge of the recent closing of St. Mary Star of the Sea School. We hope you'll agree and continue to support us in our efforts!

Joseph G. Barden, *Class of '69*
St. Mary's Alumni Association