

DIocese OF BRIDGEPORT

238 Jewett Avenue • Bridgeport, Connecticut 06606

Dear Parent,

The Office of Education has received many calls and emails regarding the leadership of St. Thomas Aquinas School. Please be aware that Sister Mary Grace Walsh, A.S.C.J., the Deputy Superintendent of Schools, has been appointed interim principal, effective immediately. Many of you know her. She is a dedicated religious, a skilled educator, and an experienced administrator. She taught elementary school for twelve years and served as principal of three schools before becoming Deputy Superintendent here in the Diocese. St. Thomas Aquinas School is in very capable hands as the search for a new principal proceeds.

From your own experience as employers and/or employees, you know that the reasons for personnel decisions generally are confidential and generally are not matters for public discussion. However, due to speculation in some of the phone calls and emails we received following the departure of the former principal, we think it is appropriate to address certain issues.

Reflecting on those communications, we need first and foremost to focus on the mission of St. Thomas Aquinas School. It is a Catholic school. Thus, as an integral part of its excellent educational program, it seeks to help our young people know, accept, and live according to the teaching of Christ as it comes to us through the Catholic Church. A vital part of its mission is to help incorporate our students, your daughters and sons, into the sacramental life of the Church, namely, the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance. Further, as a Catholic school, St. Thomas Aquinas seeks to help young people discover their God-given vocation, be it marriage, religious life, the priesthood, or to live as a single person in the world. We provide this sort of education for our children because we love them and because more than anything else, we seek their friendship with Christ in the Church and their eternal salvation in the world to come.

In view of the mission of our Catholic schools, we require that the principal, who leads both a faith community and an educational community, be a Catholic in good standing. He or she must be capable of modeling, by word and example, the formation we are trying to bring about in the lives of our young people. In accordance with Christ's teaching, someone who is civilly divorced and remarried, without the benefit of a Church annulment, cannot participate in the sacramental life of the Church. The Church reaches out pastorally to people who find themselves in this very difficult position. But it is not appropriate for anyone in this situation to lead a school with the mission of helping young people share in the sacramental life of the Church. Regretfully, we recently discovered that the former principal was in this situation. The Office of Education, true to the Church's teaching and the standards of the Diocese, had to seek a change of leadership at the school. The Pastor, Father Victor Martin, is not responsible for this decision.

Again, let us remember that St. Thomas Aquinas School is about our faith and our children. It has an excellent faculty and staff and we are confident that the school will continue to achieve academic excellence in a spirit of fidelity to our Catholic faith. Next week, when our children return to school, it is important that they do so with joy and enthusiasm. We adults must do our part to make this possible, even under these difficult circumstances.

We have scheduled a meeting for Thursday, September 6th at 7:30 p.m. at which time Dr. Dames will discuss plans for the new academic year. In the meantime, let us keep our focus on the authentic mission of the school and the well-being of our children.

With prayerful best wishes, we remain,

Faithfully in Christ,



Most Reverend William E. Lori
Bishop of Bridgeport



Margaret A. Dames, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools