

MY DEAR FRIENDS

Archbishop Schnurr assigned me to the west side of Cincinnati beginning in July 2018. Having grown up in Ireland and with all my previous assignments being at parishes in the north of the archdiocese and teaching for eighteen years at the seminary, I had no experience of "the west side." However, as I was preparing to move here people gave me several pieces of advice, which I could distill down to three recommendations:

- 1:** DON'T talk about anyone because the people here are all related or connected to each other;
- 2:** DON'T insult or say anything negative about Elder; and
- 3:** Everyone on the west side, including people who are not Catholic, identify where they are from by their parish.

I would say, in my experience, that here on the west side, uniquely for a major city like Cincinnati, that people identify where they belong, who they are, and what is important to them by their association with their parish. Parish identity is one of the most essential elements of life on the west side. Part of that parish life, here at St. Dominic, is our school. From the beginning of St. Dominic parish there has been a school. Commitment to a good, well rounded, and intensive Catholic education, has been a significant hallmark of belonging to St. Dominic parish and community. This commitment to the education of our children was never easy, as it required sacrifice, generosity, and sheer hard work. While the pastor made it possible and led the vision, and generous Sisters poured out their lives, talents, and love in a vocation to forming minds, hearts, and souls, for the love of Jesus and His people, the truth is that parents made Catholic education possible through the sweat of their brow, the labor of their hands, and the sacrifice of their treasure. That's how much they valued a good education for their children. Forming the body, mind, heart, character, and soul of a child, this is what Catholic education seeks to do and this is what generations of St. Dominic people have made possible.

From day one as pastor of St. Dominic parish, it was made clear to me, by Fr. Jim, Fr. Chris, the parish staff, teachers, and most of all parishioners, that St. Dominic's commitment to our school remains not just a priority but "the" priority for our community. I must tell you that I'm really overjoyed to know that because it is a priority for me also. I have made many visits to the school over the last year and I'm very impressed with the quality of the education, the commitment of the teachers and administration, and the sheer good nature and brightness of our children. The children are funny, smart, and happy. There is a lot of joy and enjoyment amid learning. St. Dominic School is a wonderful place to be and that is made possible because of your generosity and commitment. Congratulations on all that you have achieved.



LET'S CONTINUE TO BUILD ON THE
SUCCESS OF THE PAST, AND PRESENT,
AS WE LOOK FORWARD TO **A BRIGHT FUTURE**

As part of this commitment, we will continue renewing and expanding recruitment efforts and marketing of the school through advertising, campus tours and visits such as Open Houses, social media contact and communication, and direct contact recruitment strategies. The development of relevant programs such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics), focused education such as Advanced Math, Integrated Science, and Chess in School will continue, and we will look to integrate further specialized programs in arts and creative thinking/writing. State funding has enabled us to provide better security and a safer environment through exterior campus lighting, security cameras, and a new intercom phone system. Work has already begun on lighting and ceiling tiles and other projects will be started soon.

Now we must also turn our attention to the environment in which our children spend so many hours of their day. This summer, already, we are gearing up to freshen up the hallways with a fun new design that will make St. Dominic hallways “Pop” while still showcasing the excellent work of the students. The school building needs some attention, and we can make that happen. Like you, I want our children to learn in a safe place but also an attractive, bright, and beautiful space.

This summer we will begin a major initiative on the redevelopment and renewal of the interior of the building itself. This will be a multi-year initiative beginning this summer with the painting of the kindergarten/pre-school areas, the first floor all the way to the gym, new security locks for the gym, and possibly expanding to the cafeteria. The cafeteria area will require considerable drywalling and acoustical insulation and the renovation of the two restrooms in that area. This summer will also see the general removal of obsolete equipment. This stage has been made possible by a very generous bequest for the school. It is also hoped that we might be able to move forward on air-conditioning the gym so that it becomes more available to continue sports programs over the summer while also providing relief during the hotter parts of Spring and Fall. Stage two will include the redevelopment of the entrance and administrative area, creating a new teachers’ lounge area, and the painting of the science and math corridors. Stage three will focus on the redevelopment of the old convent area to a much more open and suitable music and art area.

Let there be no doubt about it, **we believe in the future of St. Dominic School and our school will continue to be an outstanding beacon of Catholic education.** My dear friends, if I have learned anything as a priest it is this, it is the people who make things happen and get things done. We have always had a school at St. Dominic because that was important to our great-grandparents, our grandparents, our parents, and now, we have a school, because it is important to you. We have a great school, providing an outstanding education. You make that happen! In our school a great treasure has been handed to us, now we must make sure that this treasure is available to our children, and our children’s children.

If you are a parishioner and your child is not attending St. Dominic School, I would invite you to consider making the move. Speak with the principal and see what might be possible. Many people in many generations have made St. Dominic School possible, thank you for that.

TOGETHER WE WILL CONTINUE TO **MAKE IT HAPPEN**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Ben". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "F" and a long, sweeping underline.