

ORCHARD LAKE SCHOOLS

ST. MARY'S PREPARATORY ✧ ST. JOHN PAUL II LITURGICAL CENTER ✧ POLISH INSTITUTE OF CULTURE & RESEARCH

CAMPUS COMMUNICATOR

• **DECEMBER 2023** •

"We consider Christmas as the encounter, the great encounter, the historical encounter, the decisive encounter, between God and mankind. He who has faith knows this truly; let him rejoice." - Pope Paul VI

Pope Francis once said, "God never gives someone a gift they are not capable of receiving. If he gives us the gift of Christmas it is because we all have the ability to understand and receive it."

This giving season is a good time to remember the wonder of the great encounter, to recollect what it means to see it through the eyes of a child. We see it at a children's Christmas Mass, witness a nativity play, and watch the young performers gather 'round the altar as the priest's homily makes spirits bright. We hear it when loved ones attend Mass and rejoice in song. And we feel it when we gather for Christmas traditions with friends and loved ones. The great encounter, when our faith fills our hearts and we spread joy to others, is the moment we rejoice in the gift of Christmas.

Here at Orchard Lake, we invite you, our campus community both near and far, to celebrate the Christmas season with us. Whether you have ever experienced a Wigilia Celebration or not, our December 2nd Mass in the Archdiocesan Shrine filled spirits with the music of the Filarets Choir before the special Polish Vigil Supper in the Campus Dining Hall. If you couldn't be with us, we encourage you to learn more about the Polish Wigilia meal and find your own way to appreciate all the dishes that make up this tradition. Then come join us next year!

Christmas splendor is abundant in music, and what better way to appreciate this than at Koledy: A Polish Music Christmas Concert at the historic Sweetest Heart of Mary Church in Detroit. You are truly in for a real treat when you witness the Lira Singers & Lira Chamber Players of the Lira Ensemble perform Polish carols (in English & Polish), highlighting Christmas melodies from Poland's mountain region. To reserve your tickets, visit www.picrol.org, scan the QR code inside this issue or call (248) 836-1284. Event parking is free and secure.

On Thursday, December 14, we will gather for the Chancellor's Senate Recognition Dinner at Wabeek Country Club in West Bloomfield. We invite you to become a member or to renew your membership that supports the immediate needs of the Orchard Lake Schools including its proud traditions. We seek support from our alumni, parents, friends, faculty, and staff. With your help, we can continue our quest for excellence. More details are inside this issue and on our website at: www.orchardlakeschools.com/giving-page.

May we all receive the gift of Christmas and rejoice! Keeping you in our daily prayers. Please pray for us.

The Orchard Lake Schools

ROBIN GODDARD'S ANNUAL TREE LIGHTING



For 35 years, tree lighting tradition here on campus started with decorating the grotto. Year after year, Robin Goddard and some students decorated across campus with more than 50,000 lights. The tradition has grown into a celebration called the “Mingle All the Way” Christmas Tree Lighting. On November 19, 2023, between 500-600 Orchard Lake St. Mary’s students and their families, alumni and friends took part in this year’s “Mingle All the Way” celebration. What started out as just a few people watching the lights being turned on has grown into a wonderful community celebration.

The event this year included the all-new Christmas Market featuring 15 vendors selling items from Polish hand painted ornaments and school merchandise to roasted almonds, barbecue sauce, and Spicer’s donuts and fudge. We opened the Fr. Rakoczy Gym and served hot food, hot cocoa, and an array of desserts. Ninth grade students from the Girls Division hosted the craft tables and made bags of reindeer food and painted Christmas cards with the little ones. The afterschool baking club sponsored a cookie decorating table and wrapped them up for the children to take home. Guests enjoyed a performance from the school band and listened to members of the Gospel choir from Family Victory Fellowship Church in Southfield as they led the sing-along and later performed some Christmas songs. Families enjoyed taking photos with Santa and his elves, petting the live reindeer, listening to the student carolers and watching Fr. Witek lead the blessing and lighting of the Christmas tree.



It was wonderful to have such a successful event and to see all the families enjoying some special time before the rush of the holidays. Robin sought out many donors to cover the cost of some new decorations and live reindeer this year! We are grateful for our donors and all who helped to make this special event possible. Donations can be made online to the OLS tree lighting fund to help defray the costs of next year’s event.

Thank you to our event donors, including:
BRIAN SCHEURING, PETER A. ADAMO, JENNIFER & BAUSS FAMILY, TIMBERLAND, INC., HOWARD N. STONEBACK, EVA JABERO, STEPHEN KUPHAL, TODD FRUSH, JOSEPH J. REJC, JEFFREY MIELKE, JIM LEMARBE, HARRY CARTER, JASON NAJOR, KENNETH J. SMERECKI, JR., MANDZIUK & SON FUNERAL DIRECTORS, INC., JANE LAFLAMME, RICHARD



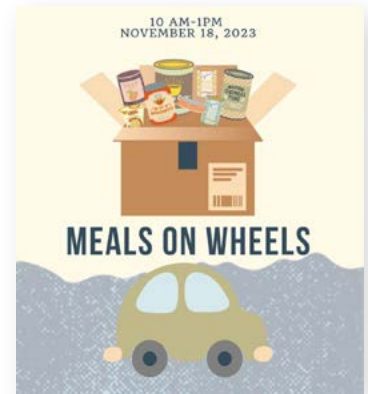


ENGELHARDT, MELODY DELLY, VELKO MILOSEVICH, BARRY M. BUGAJ, DEBRA WELLS, MATTHEW A. CARTER, LISA GRAY & FAMILY, DANIEL PICCIRILLI, SPIKE LAWRENCE, INC., BETSY ROSS OF LINCOLN AVE INC., ANDREW HARRINGTON, JEFF PETRUCCI, and anonymous donors.

THE GIVING SEASON

MEALS ON WHEELS • The Earth and Service Club joined with Meals on Wheels for the Thanksgiving season. Food was provided by Meals on Wheels and the club's drivers delivered the food on November 18th.

ADOPT-A-FAMILY & BETTER WAY DETROIT • We are all blessed to be a part of the St. Mary's family. As our motto states, God, Family, St. Mary's. What better way to honor God, work together as a family, and show our greater community the heart of St. Mary's than through our support of the annual Adopt-a-Family program.



In 2006, Betsy and Bob Moran began this tradition of adopting families from our community who were in need at Christmastime. Now in its 17th year, our St. Mary's community continues to share its blessings with those who are struggling. Giving help and hope allows us to show our Christian faith and encourage those who may need it, especially this time of year.

Our generous classes, through their representatives, have chosen to work with Better Way Detroit, a nonprofit founded by Fr. Marko Djonovic to provide dignity for those experiencing homelessness by offering the opportunity to work for pay. At Christmas, they create a store of donated items so families can provide Christmas for their families. Prep families are opening their hearts by signing up to donate a single item or a monetary donation. A single act of kindness together allows us to make a huge impact on local families in need.

STUDENT VOLUNTEERS HELP CAMPUS SHINE BRIGHT • Thank you to all the amazing Prep student volunteers who gave of their time to help Robin Goddard install Christmas lights and decorations around the Quad and campus! We're also grateful to the student volunteers who assisted at the "Mingle All the Way" Christmas Tree Lighting event, from directing participants, helping children with crafts and cookie decorating, guiding all special guests and vendors, and making spirits bright!



AMAZING ACHIEVEMENTS

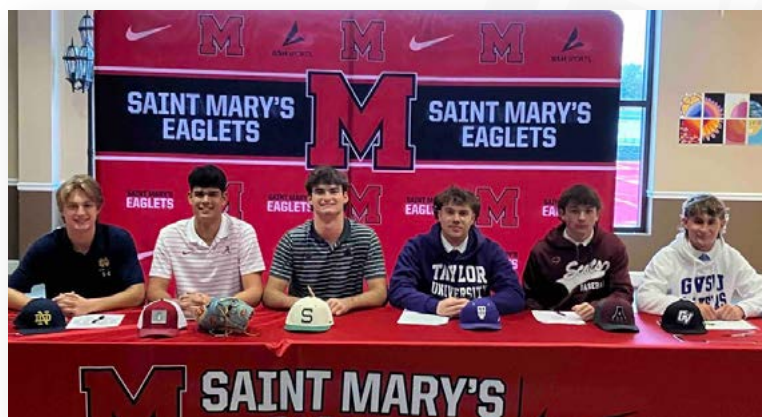
On November 8, Prep senior **ADDISON SELBY** made OLSM history as the first OLSM Girls Division athlete and the first OLSM female crew student athlete to sign a National Letter of Intent to a college or university, and the first ever to commit to a college rowing team – Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

That same day, three female student athletes from our first Girls Division senior class signed their National Letter of Intent, committing to the following athletic programs:

ADDISON SELBY • *Duquesne University* (Rowing)

BELLA RAYNISH • *Central Michigan University* (Lacrosse)

CAMERON COLE • *Toledo* (Soccer)



Immediately following, the Boys Division senior baseball athletes signed their NLI, including (L to R):

PARKER BRZUSTEWICZ • *Notre Dame*

ANTHONY PESCI • *University of Alabama*

AIDAN DONOVAN • *Michigan State University*

RYAN SOMMER • *Taylor University*

REECE MATHEWS • *Alma College*

GRANT ESSIE • *Grand Valley State University*

Congratulations to the 2023 OLSM Varsity Soccer Team for earning All-State All Academic honors, including:

All-State 1st Team • **RHYS GOLDEN**

All-State 2nd Team • **GABE RICHER**

All-State 3rd Team • **BRETT WOJKOWSKI**



Congratulations to our varsity volleyball team, MHSAA District Semifinalists. They also earned Team Academic All-State! The following team members received additional post-season honors, including:

3rd Team All-State • **KADIE TARASIEWICZ**

Honorable Mention All-State • **JILLIAN GIBBS**

All Region • **MIA CIBOR, JILLIAN GIBBS, MEREDITH MARTIN, KADIE TARASIEWICZ**

Academic All State • **SOPHIE BOROWSKI, LARKIN MIELKE**





The OLSM rowing team had two crews racing at the Head of the Charles Regatta in Boston, Massachusetts. This is the largest regatta in the world with crews from over 15 countries! Teams need to qualify for this regatta based on previous performances; furthermore, the team last competed in this race in 2011.

The boys 4+ of **JACK CALDWELL**, **NICK GRAYSMARK**, **JOE SALVATERA**, and **VAUGH BAYOFF** finished 60th

out of 90 crews, beating all other crews from Michigan that competed at this event. The girls 4+ of **REECE MCNUTT**, **IZZY COOPER**, **ADDISON SELBY**, **OLIVIA VALLIERES**, and **BRENDAN HEGEDUS** finished 28th out of 90 crews and also had the best performance of any crew from Michigan. We are very proud of our athletes and their performances!

In addition to these outstanding results, Jack Caldwell and Addison Selby will be continuing their education and rowing aspirations at Syracuse University and Duquesne University next fall. They will be missed next year!



SENIOR SPOTLIGHT



LACI MCCLAFFERTY

- Middle School: St. Patrick's School of White Lake
- Parents: Renee and Charlie
- Sibling(s): Brother, Luke, an OLSM alumnus
- Favorite campus activities: Golf and track
- School firsts: Member of first OLSM Girls hockey team!
- Fun fact: Laci loves the sisterhood of the senior class.



JOSEPH KIZI . . .

- Middle School: Our Lady of Sorrows
- Parents: Monica and Nick
- Athletics: Varsity football
- Favorite campus activities: Business Club and National Honor Society (NHS)
- School Trip: OLSM France tour with classmates summer of 2023
- Fun fact: Joseph's favorite part of OLSM is the family atmosphere.

SAVE THE DATE!



HIGHLIGHTS FROM DECEMBER 2 WIGILIA MASS & DINNER



EVER FORWARD!

ZAWSZE DO PRZODU!

STRATEGIC MASTER PLANNING PROJECT

www.orchardlakeschools.com/forward



UPDATE FROM STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND CAMPUS SAFETY

As part of, and in addition to, the “Ever Forward” Strategic Planning process, Orchard Lake St. Mary’s is submitting grant requests to fund mental health and safety initiatives on campus in the coming years.

We welcome your thoughts and suggestions as we strive to create a positive environment for mental health and safety for faculty, staff, and visitors on campus.

Suggestions can be emailed to: olsmpositivecampus@stmarysprep.com



ST. MARY'S PREPARATORY
AUCTION GALA
AN EVENING OF DINNER, AUCTIONS, LIVE MUSIC, & DANCING.
SUBURBAN COLLECTION SHOWPLACE

FEBRUARY 3
2024



ST. JOHN PAUL II LITURGICAL CENTER UPDATE

In our Catholic liturgy, December is a month of beginnings and fulfillment. With Advent, we begin our liturgical year. Mary's Immaculate Conception, celebrated on December 8, takes our reflection back to the creation story, to God's original plan for humanity. Jesus's birth is the fulfillment of the salvation history and the high point in the human history. St. Paul refers to it as "the fullness of time" when "God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption. As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'" The birth of Jesus is therefore a new beginning, re-creation, restoration of God's original plan for humanity to live for eternity. St. John Paul II, in preparation for the Jubilee year (General Audience, Wednesday, Dec 10, 1997), makes an interesting reflection on eternity brought to us through Jesus' nativity in the excerpt below.

FR. BERNARD WITEK

Director, St. John Paul II Liturgical Center



IN THE WORDS OF ST. JOHN PAUL II:

2,000 years of Christianity, the Jubilee takes us back to the event that inaugurates the Christian era: the birth of Jesus. Luke's Gospel tells us of this extraordinary event in simple and moving words: Mary *"gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn"* (2:7).

Jesus' birth makes visible the mystery of the Incarnation already realized in the Virgin's womb at the time of the Annunciation. In fact, she gives birth to the child that, as the docile and responsible instrument of the divine plan, she had conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through the humanity assumed in Mary's womb, the eternal Son of God begins to live as a child, and grows *"in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man"* (Lk 2:52). Thus he manifests himself as true man.

This truth is stressed by John in the Prologue of his Gospel, when he says: *"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us"* (1:14). By saying "became flesh", the Evangelist is alluding to his human nature not only in its mortal condition, but also in its entirety. The Son of God assumed all that is human, except sin. The Incarnation is the fruit of an immense love, which spurred God willingly to share our human condition to the full.

In becoming man, the Word of God brought about a fundamental change in the very condition of time. We can say that in Christ, human time was filled with eternity.

This transformation touches the destiny of all humanity, since *"by his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man"* (Gaudium et spes, n. 22). He came to offer everyone participation in his divine life. The gift of this life includes sharing in his eternity. Jesus said so especially with regard to the Eucharist: *"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life"* (Jn 6:54). The effect of the Eucharistic banquet is that we already possess this life.

Elsewhere Jesus indicated the same possibility with the symbol of the living water that could quench thirst, the living water of his Spirit given in view of eternal life (cf. Jn 4:14). The life of grace thus reveals a dimension of eternity that lifts up our earthly existence and directs it, with true continuity, to our entrance into heavenly life.

ZAPRASZAMY

You are invited to join us for Polish 1st Sunday!

A special Mass at the Orchard Lake Schools to pray for Polonia

Sunday, January 7th • 1:00 PM

- There will be a Polish Dinner after the Mass - \$20 per person
- Please RSVP for the dinner by Tuesday, January 2nd
- Call (248) 602-7579 or bernardwitek@yahoo.com



at the Shrine of St. John Paul II, celebrated by Fr. Bernard Witek



THE MARY PROJECT

AT ORCHARD LAKE SCHOOLS

The Mary Project is pleased to inform you that Phase 1 of our Brick Paver project has been completed and new lighting has been installed at the Grotto.

Please take a look as you enjoy the beautiful Christmas lights on campus. Phase 2 is in full swing (*to be installed November 2024*).

A BRICK WOULD MAKE A GREAT CHRISTMAS GIFT!

Visit

www.orchardlakeschools.com/grotto
to read more & place your order!

The Mary Project needs your help to sustain this prayerful space.

All donations are tax deductible. EIN: 82-5453994

POLISH CHRISTMAS CONCERT IN HEART OF DETROIT SHARES SPLENDOR OF THE SEASON

"Koledy: A Polish Music Christmas Concert" comes to Sweetest Heart of Mary Church on Sunday, December 10, 2023, at 3:00 PM – presented by the Polish Institute of Culture & Research (PICR) at Orchard Lake, Michigan. "This is the perfect family event for the season!" said Ania Bieciuk, Associate Director of Polonia Affairs at the Institute.

This event features a very special treat! The Lira Singers, accompanied by the Lira Chamber Players of the Lira Ensemble of Chicago, artist-in-residence at Loyola University Chicago, will perform a musical program narrated in English by Lucyna Migala, Founder and Artistic Director. "The Lira Ensemble is the nation's only professional performing arts company specializing in Polish performing arts, so it is a special treat to have these artists in Detroit," said Bieciuk.

"We're so excited to welcome all to experience the joy of this magical season and share in beloved Polish carols featuring Christmas melodies of Poland's mountain region," added Bieciuk. The Lira Singers will appear in colorful, authentic folk outfits from the Zakopane region of the Polish mountains. This varied concert also offers some American carols, too, as well as holiday poetry, and even a bit of music by Frederic Chopin – Poland's greatest composer – all in 75-minutes.

"And to witness this performance within the breathtaking architecture and grandeur of this church is another treat," said Bieciuk. Sweetest Heart of Mary Church is located at 4440 Russell Street in Detroit. Tickets can be purchased online or via check made payable to Polish Institute of Culture & Research. Visit www.picrol.org to reserve your tickets. For any additional questions, email info@picrol.org or call (248) 836-1284.



KOLEDY

A POLISH MUSIC
CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Sponsored by:


Polish Institute
of CULTURE
& RESEARCH
AT ORCHARD LAKE

*"The perfect family
event for the season!"*

Join us for the joy and splendor
of Polish carols, highlighting
Christmas melodies from
Poland's mountain region.

Featuring:

The Lira Singers & Lira Chamber Players of the Lira Ensemble



The Lira Ensemble
Polish Music, Song & Dance



Ticket Price: \$30

\$25 for Students & Seniors

Free and Secure Parking

Make checks payable to:

POLISH INSTITUTE OF CULTURE & RESEARCH

To pay online, scan code or visit www.picrol.org



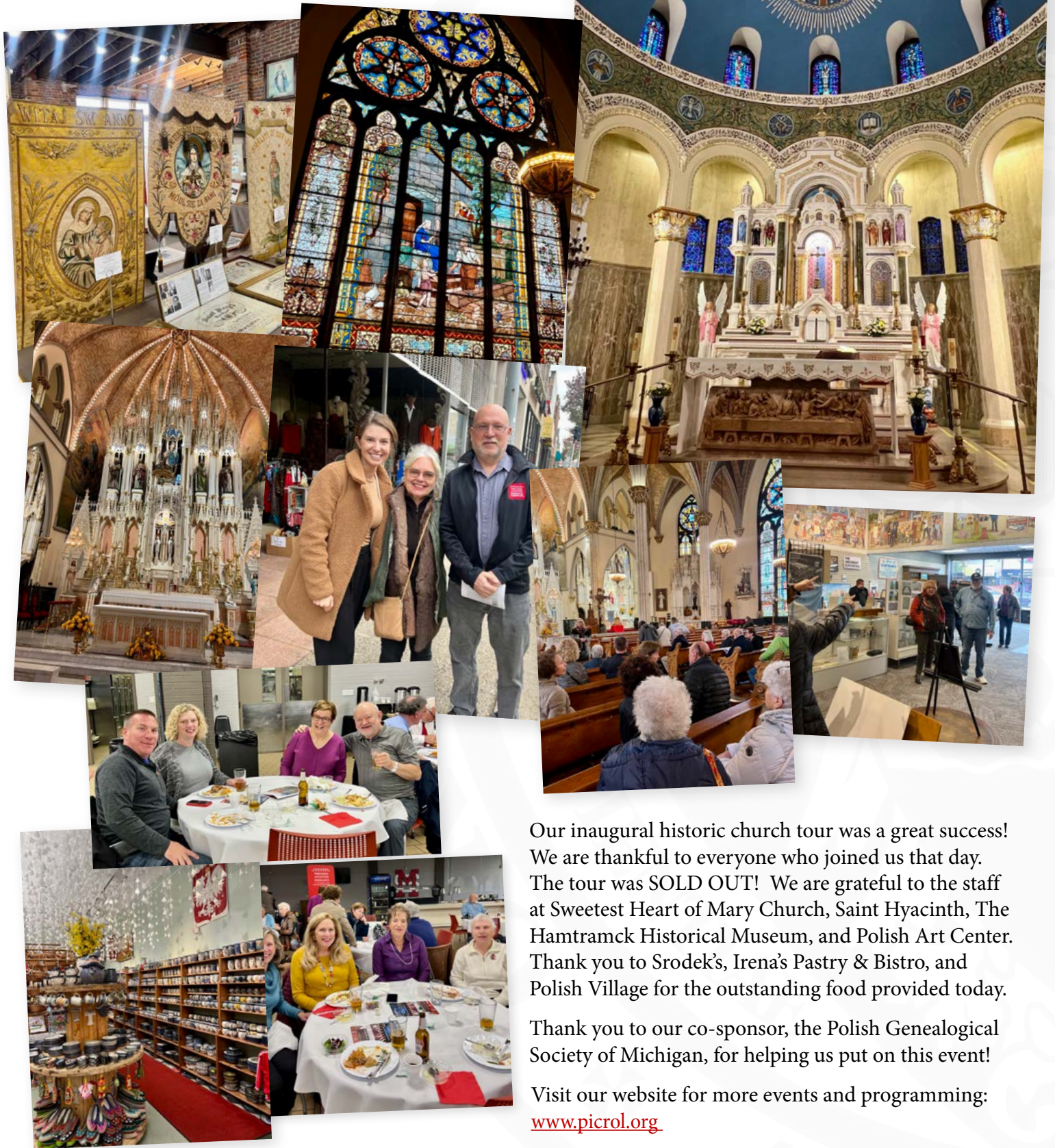
SUNDAY, DEC 10th • 3:00 PM

Sweetest Heart of Mary Church

4440 RUSSELL STREET, DETROIT, MI

Questions? email: info@picrol.org **OR** call: (248) 836-1284

"HONORING OUR ANCESTORS" HISTORICAL CHURCH TOUR A SUCCESS



Our inaugural historic church tour was a great success! We are thankful to everyone who joined us that day. The tour was SOLD OUT! We are grateful to the staff at Sweetest Heart of Mary Church, Saint Hyacinth, The Hamtramck Historical Museum, and Polish Art Center. Thank you to Srodek's, Irena's Pastry & Bistro, and Polish Village for the outstanding food provided today.

Thank you to our co-sponsor, the Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan, for helping us put on this event!

Visit our website for more events and programming:
www.picrol.org

ST. NICHOLAS' DAY (*DZIEŃ ŚWIĘTEGO MIKOŁAJA/MIKOŁAJKI*) THE MAGIC MORNING FOR KIDS IN POLAND

BY SIENNA SMITH, JUNIOR AT ORCHARD LAKE ST. MARY'S PREPARATORY



December 6th, St. Nicholas' Day (*Dzień Świętego Mikołaja*), also known as just *Mikołajki* starts off the Christmas holiday season in Poland and is one of the most exciting days for children.



St. Nicholas, the 4th-century Bishop of Myra in Lycia, which is now a province of Turkey, had a reputation for secret gift-giving. His legend and generosity continue to be a big part of Polish Christmas celebrations and tradition that are passed on in many Polish families.

On the night of December 5th, St. Nicholas drops off gifts either in carefully cleaned shoes that children place near their bed or in smaller packages hidden under pillows or on the floor next to the bed. The gifts are the first things children see after waking up the morning of December 6th when the magic of Christmas begins.

Most of the schools in Poland organize a special *Mikołaj* event where the children share gifts with each other. Weeks earlier, they draw cards with each other's names written on them, and then exchange the small symbolic presents during the school day that is closest to the day (for example if it falls on Sunday, the event could be held on any day around that weekend). This tradition of exchanging gifts is even popular among some close student groups at universities and even some workplaces.

Many people prepare small gifts for their closest friends, family, and loved ones, and gift them randomly on December 6th saying that St. Nicholas had "accidentally left the package in a wrong place".

In Poland, the gifts hidden under the Christmas Tree later in December are believed to be left, for example, by an Angel (*Aniołek*) or the Little Child (*Dzieciątko*, the Baby Jesus) - it depends on the beliefs of a particular region.

St. Nicholas' Day has not always been celebrated in the manner it is nowadays. The idea of Santa Claus/St. Nicholas bringing gifts to the children started becoming widespread only in the 19th century. Before that it was popular mostly among the wealthier families, such as the *szlachta* (Polish nobility). *Mikołajki* started to be widely celebrated at the end of 19th and beginning of the 20th century but gained the biggest popularity only after the end of the Second World War.

Polish Language Schools in Metro Detroit also celebrate a version of *Mikołajki* with their students. For example, students from the Father Dąbrowski Language Center at Orchard Lake will celebrate the tradition with a meaningful gathering for language instructors, students and their families. *Święty Mikołaj* (Saint Nicholas) will be dropping by on December 15th to celebrate the Christmas season and share small gifts with students in honor of his name day.



PICR HOSTS COALITION OF POLISH AMERICANS

The Annual Convention of the CPA (Coalition of Polish Americans) occurred on the campus of Orchard Lake Schools, November 4-5, 2023.

Additionally, the Polish American Coalition held their elections.

Mr. Leszek Pawlik was re-elected for a consecutive term as Chairman of the Coalition.

The Polish American Coalition is a non-profit organization that started its operations in 2017 and its main goal is to promote the interests of the Polish diaspora in the USA.

The Polish Institute of Culture & Research also hosted a Meet & Greet for Coalition representatives with the Institute's director, Dr. John

Radziłowski and representatives of the Institute's Board of Directors. Director Radziłowski answered questions from the audience. The questions ranged on topics regarding the Institute's mission,



continuing Polish heritage at the Orchard Lake Schools and its strategic plan for the future. The Master of Ceremonies was Mrs. Maria Szonert-Binienda.



PICR STAFF RECEIVES LOCAL RECOGNITION

Congratulations to **ANIA BIECIUK**, our very own Associate Director for Polonia Affairs, on receiving the "Dziękuję Award" from the Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan for her outstanding service to Polonia. The award was given to Ania during the Inaugural Historical Tour by Therese Leszcz, President of the organization. Keep up the great work!



POLISH INSTITUTE SPONSORS CHILDREN'S PROGRAM AT THE 30TH ANNUAL ANN ARBOR POLISH FILM FESTIVAL

The Polish Institute understands how critical it is to support language development at a young age. We were thrilled to sponsor a program that can be enjoyed by our newest generation of Polish Americans. Polish language cartoons play a crucial role in preserving and promoting the Polish language and culture.

The Film Festival took place on November 10-12, 2023 at the State Theater in Ann Arbor. It is an annual event organized by the Polish Cultural Fund in cooperation with the Ann Arbor Polonia Association and the U-M Polish Student Association. Since its inception in 1993, the festival has featured contemporary Polish documentaries, animated shorts, and feature films offering diverse perspectives on a range of Polish and global issues. The festival features a juried film competition in three categories: documentary film, short narrative film, and film debut.

HERE ARE SOME REASONS WHY CARTOONS ARE IMPORTANT • *by Ania Biciuk*

LANGUAGE PRESERVATION • Polish language cartoons provide an opportunity for children of Polish descent to learn and practice the Polish language. By watching cartoons in Polish, they can develop their vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation skills. This helps them maintain a connection to their heritage language, ensuring its preservation for future generations.

CULTURAL IDENTITY • Cartoons are not just about language; they also convey cultural values, traditions, and customs. Polish language cartoons expose children to Polish folklore, history, and traditions, fostering a sense of cultural identity and pride. They help children understand and appreciate their Polish heritage, even if they were born and raised in a different country.

EMOTIONAL CONNECTION • Watching cartoons in their native language can evoke a sense of nostalgia and emotional connection for Polish American children. It allows them to feel closer to their Polish roots and creates a sense of belonging. This emotional connection can be a powerful motivator for them to continue learning and engaging with the Polish language and culture.

MULTILINGUALISM & COGNITIVE BENEFITS • Research has shown that bilingualism or multilingualism has numerous cognitive benefits, such as improved problem-solving skills, enhanced creativity, and better academic performance. By exposing children to Polish language cartoons, they have the opportunity to become bilingual or multilingual, which can have long-term cognitive advantages.

BRIDGE BETWEEN GENERATIONS • Polish language cartoons can serve as a bridge between different generations within Polish American families. They provide a common ground for grandparents, parents, and children to bond over shared cultural experiences. Watching these cartoons together can facilitate intergenerational communication and strengthen family ties.

COMMUNITY BUILDING • Polish language cartoons can contribute to the formation of a Polish American community. They provide a shared cultural experience and can be a catalyst for organizing cultural events, language classes, or community gatherings. This sense of community helps Polish Americans connect with each other, fostering a supportive network and a sense of belonging.





NICK DI PONIO (P'98) – NEW HEAD BASEBALL COACH



We're so excited to welcome back **NICK DI PONIO** as St. Mary's Preparatory Head Baseball Coach! The Prep Class of 1998 graduate helped lead the varsity baseball team to its first MHSAA state championship (1998) in school history. During his senior year, he was named to the All-State Dream Team and USA Today All-American honorable mention. "I played freshman and JV basketball, plus JV baseball in 9th grade," said Di Ponio, "and Varsity Coach John Willis asked my dad, Ben, if he'd be interested in the JV head coaching job. After I was asked to step into a few varsity games, I was moved up, and during my sophomore year, my dad moved into the varsity assistant coach position. I earned the privilege of being a two-year team captain my junior and senior years at OLSM."

Di Ponio continued his baseball career at Oakland University where he finished with a career .339 batting average, and currently ranks in the top ten

all-time in several offensive categories. During his college years, he pursued his degree in business and finance and met his wife, Lisa, who was pursuing a secondary education degree before going on to earn her Master of Arts in Teaching and Teaching English as a Second Language in subsequent years. Following his collegiate career, he played overseas in the Italian Professional Baseball League for four seasons. In 2002, he was a member of the San Marino Baseball Club competing in the European Cup in Barcelona, Spain.

Nick and Lisa married in 2004. From 2005-2010, he served as OLSM's varsity baseball head coach, bringing his dad, Ben, back as an assistant coach along with 1984 World Series Championship team member Dan Petry as another assistant coach. "During these six years, I brought in several other assistant coaches, including OLSM alumnus Joe Zacharzewski, and former Oakland University teammates Tony Marulli and Dominic Carmosino." Di Ponio helped lead the team to six district titles, three regional titles, and state runner-up finishes in 2007 and 2009. Several of his former players went on to college and professional baseball.

As their family grew, Di Ponio knew he had to move on with his family's needs and career demands in his real estate, property management and building business while wife, Lisa, worked full-time teaching high school students in the Farmington Public Schools. "In 2017, an opportunity arose to purchase an old driving range," adds Di Ponio. "It gave us a blank slate – a place to build an athletic complex." Today, Coach Di Ponio owns and operates the Huron Valley Athletic Complex (HVAC) in Milford, Michigan, as well as owning and operating the West Oakland Wings (WOW) amateur baseball and softball program, with 18 current travel teams from 8U-18U. He and Lisa have three children: Gaetano "Guy" (16) -- a sophomore at St. Mary's Prep, Cecilia (13), and Angelo (11).

"For me, to really understand what it is to be a St. Mary's student, you must experience it," he adds. "Going through your formative years in high school, finding yourself, your faith, and the people you'll share these memories with for the rest of your life, and finding out what that means to you and others are gifts OLSM gave me. Sports taught me many life lessons, but the Prep taught me how to take these values out into the world."

OLSM 2024 BASEBALL STAFF

HEAD COACH: NICK DI PONIO (P '98)

- Oakland University
- Italian Baseball Professional League
(Rovigo+San Marino Baseball Club)

ASST. COACH: DOMINIC CARMOSINO

- Oakland University
- Milb Detroit Tigers (27th Round)
- Assistant varsity coach at OLSM 2006-2010

ASST. COACH: PAT MISCH

- Western Michigan University
- MLB: San Francisco Giants
New York Mets
- Milb: Philadelphia Phillies
Detroit Tigers
Miami Marlins
- CPBL: Lamigo Monkeys
- NPB: Orix Buffaloes

ASST. COACH: THEO PICCIRILLI (P'10)

- Western Michigan University

ASST. COACH: PETER VARON

- Oakland University
- Mid Missouri Mavericks Independent
Frontier League
- Greek National Team 2002

Coach Di Ponio is so excited about returning to OLSM. "The students are thriving! The Girls Division is building on its legacy and drawing from the values and traditions of what has meant so much to the Boys Division. My family and I will be a part of the St. Mary's family for years to come. I'm happy to be back! St. Mary's Prep's future depends on our students. You are the legacy that is growing our 139-year history."



DARRELL ROUNDS (P'23) ON THE HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE LIFE

If you ask Darrell Rounds, Prep Class of 2023, and Hope College freshman, how St. Mary's prepared him for college, he will tell you it did so in all aspects including academics, athletics, faith, and social life. "St. Mary's helped form me into a student athlete that can truly make an impact on my college campus," said the former varsity football player and student council president. And Hope College, with the small class sizes, kind, hospitable staff and students, superb athletics, and an overall warm environment, feels like a bigger version of St. Mary's. It's truly a home away from home, and I couldn't see myself going anywhere else. And if I could thrive and excel at St. Mary's, then I have no doubt I'll be able to do the same at Hope."

Playing under the tutelage of both Coach Porritt and Coach Gonzales prepared him for Division 3 football. "College ball is very different from high school ball, what with the intensity, opponents, and just overall time consumption," said Rounds. "However, the OLSM football program truly prepared me to face any and every adversity that came my way. As for my position, I play left tackle on the offensive line, and as for the season it has sadly come to an end, but we did have a fun and successful season going 8-2, something that the entirety of the team is very proud of."



When we asked him what advice he'd share with each grade level student at OLSM, he had some great advice. "To the freshman, my biggest piece of advice is to just take everything in. This is a new chapter for you, so it's totally ok to be nervous. So many new things are coming your way, and while that may sound intimidating and frightening, I promise the high school years are going to be some of the most enjoyable years of your life. There's no reason to be scared, I promise you. Just take it one day at a time and enjoy it.

Sophomores, you have a feel of what high school is like at this point. But just because you think you have a handle on school doesn't make it easier. Just continue to grind in the classroom, on the field/court, and around campus and have fun. If you take it one day at a time you're going to have a blast.

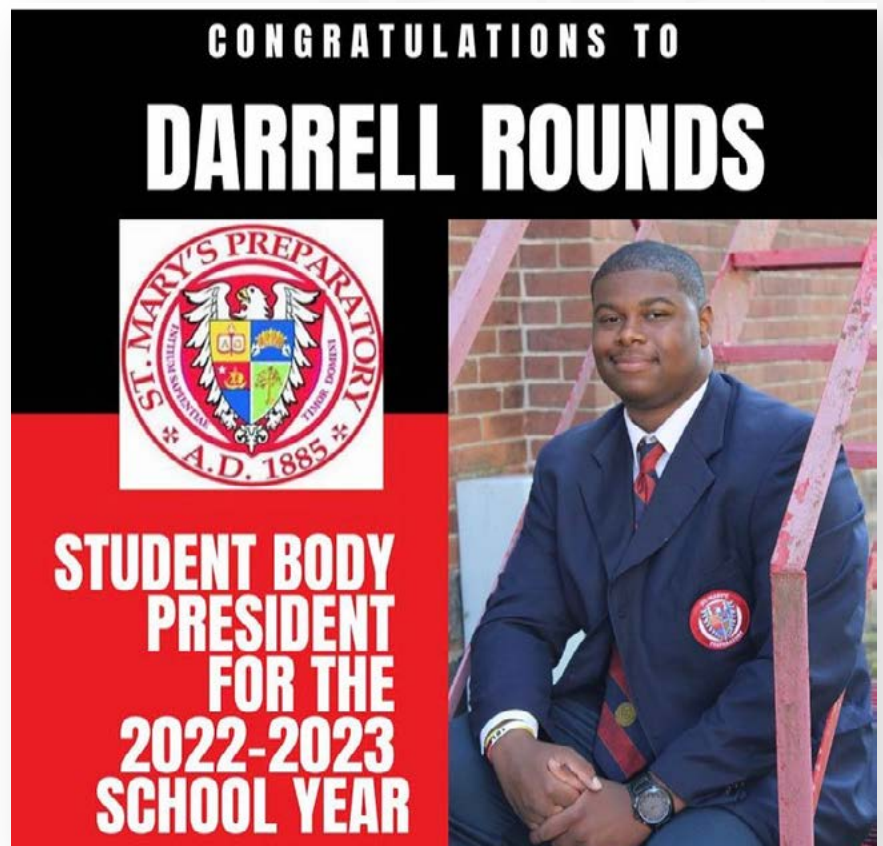
Junior year is no doubt the hardest year. With all the tests and exams and the near exodus of high school, there's a lot of emotions and feelings coursing through you this year. The easiest thing you can do is not let the pressure get to you. There are resources and people that want you to succeed so turn to them to help ease some of the pressure. It's going to be hard, but if you take it just one day at a time, it makes that pressure fade away.

And lastly, to the seniors, I know you're itching to leave, after being there for four years I totally get it. Enjoy yourselves, you've earned it. However, with the end of this journey a new one begins and it's important to account for everything you've been taught so you can thrive at the next level. Don't fear what the future holds for you. If you can make it through high school, then you can do just about anything. Whether it be applying for college, taking a gap year, getting a job, it doesn't matter because each holds its own challenges. But you can overcome it, after all you just have to take it one day at a time."

Rounds adds that the Prep's "God. Family. St. Mary's." is something he lives by every day not just as a college freshman but as a young man in general. "Every opportunity, gift and blessing I have is all because of God," he adds. "God has impacted my life

and allowed me to soar to levels that I only dreamed about as a kid. He's first in everything I do, and my family is second. Every step I took, every move I made, my family was right there with me. My father was in the front paving the way, setting an example as to what it means to be a great man. My mother was behind me, being the backbone and support whenever I fell or slipped up. And my sisters, they were right beside me. We learn from each other; we laugh with each other and we love each other. God gave me my greatness, and he allowed my family to bring that greatness to light. As for that last word, St. Mary's, it's universal. I could change that to Hope College and the meaning would be the exact same. It's all about representation. I represent God, I represent my family's name and I now represent Hope college just like I represented St. Mary's."

And to St. Mary's, his alma mater, he says he continues to look forward. "The biggest thing I look forward to is just seeing how evolved the school is in comparison to when I attended. I just look forward to giving back to the school to repay them for the opportunities it's opened for me. If there is anything I can do to encourage and lift up the new era of St. Mary's, then I will do it to the best of my abilities."



Upcoming Event Highlights

DECEMBER 2023

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|---|---|
| <p>1 Girls Division Winter Formal</p> <p>2 Girls Varsity Hockey vs. Ann Arbor Pioneer @ 4:00 PM
Boys Varsity Basketball vs. Flint Carmen-Ainsworth @ 5:00 PM
Wigilia Mass & Dinner</p> <p>3 Polish 1st Sunday</p> <p>5 OLSM Band Christmas Concert @ 7:00 PM @ SMAC
Girls Varsity Basketball vs. Regina @ 7:00 PM</p> <p>6 St. Nicholas Day
Wrestling @ Novi Quad @ 5:30 PM</p> <p>7 Advent by Candlelight Mass & Dinner</p> <p>9 Girls Varsity Hockey vs. Livingston @ 4:00 PM
Wrestling @ Birmingham Groves Tournament</p> <p>10 Koledy: A Polish Christmas Concert @
Sweetest Heart of Mary Church @ 3:00 PM</p> <p>11-14 Midterm Exams</p> | <p>12 Boys Varsity Basketball vs. Old Redford Academy @ 7:00 PM</p> <p>14 End of 2nd Marking Period
Chancellor's Senate Recognition Dinner @ Wabeek Country Club</p> <p>15 Boys Varsity Basketball vs. St. John's @ 7:00 PM
Wrestling @ Oakland County @ 3:00 PM</p> <p>15 No School - Christmas Recess (<i>Classes Resume Jan. 3</i>)</p> <p>16 Girls Varsity Hockey vs. St. Clair Shores @ 4:00 PM
Wrestling @ Oakland County @ TBD</p> <p>19 Girls Varsity Hockey vs. Grosse Pointe S @ 4:30 PM
Girls Varsity Basketball vs. St. Catherine @ 7:00 PM</p> <p>20 Girls Varsity Hockey vs. Regina @ 4:30 PM</p> <p>21 Boys Varsity Basketball vs. Flint Beecher @ 7:00 PM</p> <p>25 Christmas Day</p> <p>31 New Year's Eve</p> |
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"We never give more honor to Jesus than when we honor his Mother."

- St. Louis DeMontfort



THE MARY PROJECT IS DEDICATED TO THE BEAUTIFICATION OF THE MARIAN
GROTTO OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES AT ORCHARD LAKE ST. MARY'S.

The Mary Project is a registered 501(c)(3) and all donations are tax exempt.



THE MARY PROJECT
AT ORCHARD LAKE SCHOOLS

MONTHLY ENROLLMENTS

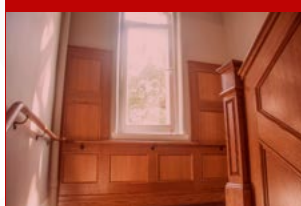
Throughout the year, donors to the Orchard Lake Schools enroll their loved ones in the "Friends of the Orchard Lake Schools" Enrollment. These names are those that have been added from the month of October. Prayers are offered at every mass at the Archdiocesan Shrine of St. John Paul II for those names enrolled. **For more enrollment information, please contact Lisa Gray at lgray@orchardlakeschools.com.**

HELEN BRISH
JOSE CORDEIRO
EUGENE EDWARD GIERLACH
MARY AND MICHAEL GUERRIERI

STEPHEN HAINES
TOM HASENAUER
JACKIE KANIA
JACQUELINE (MACKO) KANIA

TERI JO MCGRATH
GERALD "JERRY" PRIESKORN
BOB SCULL
EILEEN WALSH

Looking for
impactful
campus
dedication/
naming
opportunities
that leave a
lasting campus
impression for
generations to
enjoy?



CONTACT
Chris Czarnik
cczarnik@
orchardlakeschools.com

DECEMBER 2023

MASS SCHEDULE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3 • *FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT*

9:00 AM	FR. WITEK • POLISH*	SEMINARY CHAPEL
9:00 AM	FR. SUHY • LATIN	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
11:00 AM	FR. WITEK • ENGLISH	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
1:00 PM	FR. WITEK • POLISH* • <i>POLISH 1st SUNDAY</i>	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8 • *FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION*

1:00 PM	FR. WITEK • ENGLISH	SEMINARY CHAPEL
5:30 PM	FR. WITEK • POLISH*	SEMINARY CHAPEL
7:00 PM	FR. WITEK • ENGLISH	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10 • *SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT*

9:00 AM	FR. WITEK • POLISH*	SEMINARY CHAPEL
9:00 AM	MSGR. BROWNE • LATIN	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
11:00 AM	FR. WITEK • ENGLISH	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17 • *THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT*

9:00 AM	FR. WITEK • POLISH*	SEMINARY CHAPEL
9:00 AM	FR. McDONELL • LATIN	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
11:00 AM	FR. WITEK • ENGLISH	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24 • *FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT*

9:00 AM	FR. WITEK • POLISH*	SEMINARY CHAPEL
9:00 AM	MSGR. BROWNE • LATIN	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
11:00 AM	FR. WITEK • ENGLISH	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
MIDNIGHT	FR. WITEK • BILINGUAL* • <i>VIGIL FOR CHRISTMAS EVE</i>	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

MONDAY, DECEMBER 25 • *CHRISTMAS DAY*

9:00 AM	FR. WITEK • POLISH*	SEMINARY CHAPEL
9:00 AM	FR. SUHY • LATIN	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
11:00 AM	FR. WITEK • ENGLISH	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31 • *FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY*

9:00 AM	FR. WITEK • POLISH*	SEMINARY CHAPEL
9:00 AM	FR. WHITAKER • LATIN	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
11:00 AM	FR. WITEK • ENGLISH	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
MIDNIGHT	FR. WITEK • ENGLISH* • <i>VIGIL FOR MARIAN FEAST</i>	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

1st THURSDAY, 1st FRIDAY & 1st SATURDAY DEVOTIONS

FRIDAY 12/1	MASS AT 7:00 PM THEN DEVOTIONS • FR. WITEK	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
SATURDAY 12/2	MASS AT 9:00 AM THEN DEVOTIONS • FR. WITEK	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
THURSDAY 12/7	MASS AT 7:00 PM THEN DEVOTIONS • FR. WITEK	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
THURSDAY 12/14	<i>BIBLE STUDY</i> AFTER MASS AT 7:45 PM	SEMINARY CHAPEL
FRIDAY 12/15	<i>DIVINE MERCY PRAYERS</i> AT 7:45 PM	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE
	<i>KRAK BIBLIJNY</i> AT 8:00 PM	SEMINARY CHAPEL
FRIDAY 12/22 - SATURDAY 12/23	<i>ALL NIGHT ADORATION</i>	ST. JOHN PAUL II SHRINE

* Feed for the Live stream of the Polish Masses: www.facebook.com/olsnews