



## **An Innovative Approach To Learning and Student Development**

**Starting in the Fall of 2020, Orchard Lake St. Mary's Preparatory  
continues to redefine the high school experience as the locally  
exclusive Co-Divisional platform in Catholic Education**

Message from Headmaster Bob Pyles & Prep Chair Andrew Harrington:

We are writing to announce an exciting new direction for St. Mary's Prep. We would like to start by thanking you for your trust and giving us the opportunity to educate your Son. The development of our incoming students into St. Mary's men has been our mission for the last 135 years. It has not changed and, thanks to you, continues. But times are changing for all in education, Catholic schools in particular; thus, there are three primary reasons for adopting this new model:

- It allows us to maintain our long-standing commitment to small class sizes that have been a hallmark of our reputation as the best choice of school for personalized and individualized attention to your Son's learning needs.

- Our desire and commitment to **you** to protect our mission of “God, Family, St. Mary’s” for the next generation mandates this move at this time.
- Providing opportunities for more students to receive a St Mary’s education and making the community a better place.

We are very aware of the data specific to school-aged children in southeast Michigan, which is projected to decrease by 25% from 2000-2025. In addition, there has been a 61% decline in US visas issued for International students from China, which represents a large portion of our 7-day boarders. However, the continued success of our school cannot be assured if we do not respond to declining enrollment in our local area in both public and private schools. If we are to turn these challenges into opportunities, we need to be creative and inclusive in our educational model.

We have spent the past few years strategically planning how we can remain at the forefront of education and maintain and build upon our position as the fastest-growing Catholic School in Michigan over the past 20 years.

St. Mary’s has actually increased its overall market share over the past 5 years; but this modest increase is not enough for us to expand our culture, tradition and core values to the next generation of students.

We strongly believe that we have the best chance at continuing this period of growth by expanding our student base to include families who want the St. Mary’s caliber of education and spiritual guidance for their daughters.

Therefore, we are pleased to announce that in the Fall of 2020, Orchard Lake St. Mary’s Preparatory will introduce an innovative approach to learning and developing the entire person. A Co-Divisional Platform (Boys & Girls Divisions) will be offered ONLY to the incoming 9th-grade class for the 2020-2021 school year. This unique model for the incoming 9th-grade classes offers the best of both worlds: a primarily single-gender classroom experience alongside opportunities for 9th-grade boys and girls to engage socially, spiritually and in co-curricular activities.

As excited as we are about this change -- and as much promise for the future as this holds -- we want to assure you at the onset of a few points which are very important:

- **We are committed to maintaining a primarily single-gender learning environment and protecting our culture.**
- **The Co-Divisional school structure (Boys & Girls Divisions) that we are adopting is NOT a “regular” Co-educational school.**
- **This is a phased-in program.** ALL of our current students (Classes of 2021, '22 and '23) will remain in a single-gender classroom model, have a single-gender Ring Day and Graduation -- and will see minimal changes, if any, to their experience at St Mary's. We are committed to this academic and organizational set-up for all current and incoming students going forward.

St. Mary's received advice from three nationally-regarded Catholic high schools that have recently adopted similar models. DeLaSalle Collegiate in Chicago and both Holy Cross and Xaverian High Schools in New York City all report that enrollment and student opportunities have significantly increased and strengthened since adopting a similar model, but more importantly -- their culture has not changed.

Our school is financially healthy today; however, we can not simply look at today but must plan 3, 5, and 10 years down the road. We hold a strong endowment of \$15M dollars. We have raised more than \$6M dollars in private donations towards the construction (recently started Phase 1) of our new classroom building and have already invested \$2.2M dollars into upgrades to our current classrooms and learning centers. We are also exploring plans to build a new 50,000 square-foot indoor athletic facility. However, the continued success of our school cannot be assured if we do not respond to declining enrollment in both public and private schools and international students. If we are to turn these challenges into opportunities, we need to be creative and inclusive in our educational model.

## **Now Is The Time**

Organizations, programs, and policies of the Schools have adapted as needs in society and in the Church have changed since 1885.

Three distinct schools – SS. Cyril & Methodius Seminary, St. Mary's College and St. Mary's Preparatory – emerged from a restructuring of the Seminary in 1927-28, each with its own four-year program.

Lay students were first admitted to the college in 1969.

Women and commuter students in the college and theology soon followed in 1970.

The preparatory first offered a day-school option to its traditional boarding school program in 1987.

In 2019, St Mary's will transition to a Co-Divisional school (Boys and Girls Divisions) for the incoming 9th-grade class for the 2020-2021 academic year; all current students will remain in a single-gender learning environment until graduation and will see minimal change if any.

At this moment in our history, we are reminded of the words of Saint John Paul II, who visited our campus twice during his lifetime. In his encyclical *On the Collaboration of Men and Women*, he encouraged "cooperation and adequate support throughout our lives so that both genders can become healthy men and women."

## **Our Values Are Clear**

**Our mission and message remain the same.**

**1. God**

**2. Family**

**3. St. Mary's**

**OLSM TRADITION**