

SAINT AUGUSTINE SAINTS NEWS

• VOLUME 13, NUMBER 3

• Summer 2021

SINCE 1858

Welcome to the
Home of the Saints

For Parents, Alumni, Parishioners and Friends of St. Augustine School in Washington D.C.

Welcoming the Dawn

As I begin this pastor's column, a verse from the Psalms seems apropos in this moment: "Sing the praises of the Lord, you his faithful people, praise his holy name... weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning!" (Ps 30:4a-5). This verse inspired the title of this reflection.

When I presided in June at the Baccalaureate Mass for the Saint Augustine Class of 2021, which was immediately followed by the graduation ceremony, I felt as if a victory lap – more so than a graduation party – was in order! Like most others in this country and many places around the world, I found this 2020-2021 academic year the most challenging ever. To get through it, sacrifice, perseverance, long nights and not a little bit of courage were going to have to be exercised to some degree by EVERYONE: Staff, faculty, parents, students, parishioners, alumni, and benefactors. True to form and in the best traditions of our long Saint Augustine Catholic School history (which includes surviving another pandemic in 1918), we did it. You did it, and I couldn't be more proud.

On the day of their graduation, I shared with the Class of 2021 and their

From the Pastor



families that while adversity can build character, more often than not it just reveals it. And reveal it did. In rarer cases, this pandemic and our efforts to continue in-school learning was met with skepticism, naysayers and much doubt that our efforts to keep the children safe in the building would be successful. But the truth be told, I believe fear was the real culprit! People across the country were not just getting sick but dying at the rate of tens of thousands each day at the height of the pandemic. I completely understand.

But we had to press forward and PRACTICE the faith in God that we talk about, teach about, read about, sing about, and preach about as we WENT ABOUT our day to day lives. Otherwise, what's the point of a faith-based school? Fear as an acronym can either mean: "Flee Everything and Run" or "Face Everything and Rise!" Only one of these responses is worthy of the great women, men and young people of faith who have gone before us and weathered even greater challenges and storms than we have. Sometimes in life, we choose our path, and sometimes it is chosen for us. I am, and always will be, eternally grateful for all of you who chose to RISE to the challenges we faced this year. It represents the best in the long and enduring story of Saint Augustine Catholic School.

Thank you for never quitting or stop giving and sacrificing for this noble cause. Even in the darkest moments you trusted that the dawn would arrive. It always does.

With you in the Lord's Vineyard,
Fr Patrick A. Smith
Pastor

INSIDE PAGES

<i>From the President's Desk.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Learning from failure a key to success, students told.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Longtime Spanish Teacher Monzon Retires.....</i>	<i>4</i>

<i>Alumni Notes.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Jacquelyn Thornton retires from elementary school teaching.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Science Fair May 25.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Contacting our young alumni.....</i>	<i>7</i>

Faith and Resilience



From the President's Desk

Dear Friends,

Greetings and thank you to our Parishioners. Sponsors. Parents, Students, Faculty, and Staff for your cooperation throughout the 2020-2021 School year.

The year 2021 brings to mind two important words: Faith and Fortitude. Faith is the supernatural gift that enables us to trust God in all circumstances. Fortitude is a fruit of the holy spirit that gives us the ability to endure difficulties positively. Thank you all for showing Faith and Fortitude through all the challenges of the 2020 - 2021 school year. As a Church and School Community, we endured and overcame all things that the school year presented.

During the 2021-2022 school year, our watchwords will be Faith and Resilience. Resilience is the capacity to go through circumstances with a toughness strengthened by Faith in a God who supplies all things.

In the first quarter, we will focus on:

Activity	Month
Daily prayers for a successful session	August
Hard work Our students promise to do their best to actively participate in school	September
Celebrating the Joe/Josephine in our Lives and the Rosary	October
Responsibility- Turn in all schoolwork	October
Community Service- Complete assignment for Prudential	
Spirit of Service Award	November
Concern for others/Love Christmas outreach	December

I encourage you to stand firm in Faith and be Strong. 1st Corinthians 16:13. Enjoy the rest of your summer.

Sincerely,

Sister Emmanuella Ladipo, HHCJ

Weekly School Mass



Father Raymond Nwabueze, O.P., offers the weekly school Mass at Saint Augustine Catholic Church on Wednesday, May 26. Fr. Raymond is the main Catholic chaplain at the National Children's Medical Center in Washington, D.C., and serves as the mission director for the Dominican Fathers and Brothers in the Province of St. Joseph the Worker, which covers his native Nigeria.



A seventh grader, Roy Castleberry, Jr., lectures at the weekly school Mass at St. Augustine on May 26, three days after the Feast of Pentecost, which commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles and early followers of Jesus, after the Risen Jesus had ascended to Heaven. In addition to serving as lectors, St. Augustine student sing at the weekly Mass, serve at the altar, and bring up the gifts to the altar. Mr. Marvin Ford, music teacher, is seated at the piano in the background.

Learning from failure a key to success, students told



One key to success is learning to accept failures as a part of our lives, a local business leader told Saint Augustine Catholic School middle school students during a May 27 morning visit to the school.

Brendan Quinn serves as chief executive officer of Ernest Maier Inc. of Bladensburg, Md., a \$100 million ready mix concrete company with 300 employees and retail locations from Charlottesville, Va., to the beaches of Delaware.

His 20-minute talk to the socially distanced students in the Saint Augustine Room included everything from advice for adjusting to high school to what makes a good board of directors to how to coach youth sports and unexpected lessons learned in failure. He told his audience about how he purchased the company when it was on the verge of failure, at the age of 23, and he had to lay off half of the company's staff in order to keep the company afloat.

A native of the District of Columbia, Mr. Quinn attended St. Anne's Academy at Tenley Circle, the parish school for his home parish, and then St. John's College High School and the University of Notre Dame, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in Economics. In addition, he has been a Catholic school parent at St. Ann's Academy, Our Lady of Lourdes, and

St. John's College High School and has coached CYO basketball and soccer.

In June 2020, his company established the Turan Chew Memorial Scholarship Fund at Saint Augustine, in memory of a long-term Ernest Maier employee who had suddenly passed away. Subsequently, Mr. Quinn has made a multi-year commitment of support to Saint Augustine, a school he decided to support because it is located in his native city, becoming more interested in it once he learned more about its history.

In answering an audience question, Mr. Quinn spoke about the "biggest mistake" he had made in business, investing in an infrastructure project in Angola, which resulted in a loss of \$5 million. Despite this loss, from his time in the African country, he learned from observing Angolans how to be grateful for each day as it arrives. "The perspective of people in Angola is different," than Americans, he said.

Mr. Quinn said that he can practice the virtues of "faith, hope and love," through his work, which he genuinely enjoys. Reflecting on his early career as a banker, he advised students to not focus so much on making money as on doing what they enjoy.

He encouraged the Saint Augustine middle school students to personalize their high school essays, particularly if they want to attend a particular high school, to demonstrate what has drawn them to the school. "Do your homework," he said of applying to high schools. He also encouraged the students to work to receive high grades to make them more attractive admissions candidates.

He recalled playing football at St. John's as a freshman student for two weeks and encouraged his audience to consider joining a club or playing a sport when they enter high school as a way of testing themselves and meeting

other students. Mr. Quinn is clearly a social man, saying he enjoys joking with his colleagues at work and sees part of his role as providing a positive corporate environment.

Speaking of sports, Mr. Quinn said that when he coaches, he is most interested in the level of effort his teams put out. Once a team becomes successful, the best thing a coach can do is get out of the way and let them succeed. The title he most enjoys being called is "Coach."

In response to a student's question, Mr. Quinn said that one school board that he served on was too large to be effective: twenty-two members. The Ernest Maier corporate board, meanwhile, is sufficiently decisive and responsive with four members.

In follow up to another question, Mr. Quinn said that his company experienced unexpected growth during the COVID-19 pandemic, largely because his customers work outside, and their work has not been interrupted as much as some other lines of work during the COVID-19 era. He said during the early months of the pandemic, Ernest Maier had to limit its retail locations to three customers at a time, and he had to pitch in any way he could, including answering phones and greeting customers.



Ms. Cheryl Hanton, the longest serving member of our staff, teaches a fifth grade Math class.

Longtime Spanish Teacher Monzon Retires

Emilio Monzon would get up at the crack of dawn on weekdays – 4:30 a.m. – and make 30-minute drive from his home in College Park, Md., to Saint Augustine Catholic School, usually arriving before anyone else, at 6:30 a.m. or so from his office at the Gingras Ecumenical Center. Then he would grade papers and prepare for classes before the arrival of students at around 8:00 a.m.

With his retirement last month, Mr. Monzon completed a 27-year teaching career, one which has taken him from instructing students how to type and use computers through a highly successful, government-funded, eight-week job training program at the Latin American Youth Center (1994-2002), before he came to St. Augustine in 2014 as the school's Spanish teacher, which followed earlier stints at St. Columba School in Oxon Hill, Md. (2002-2011), and Don Bosco Cristo Rey High School in Takoma Park (2011-2014).

"Sister Gloria was right: teaching is a mission," Monzon said, referring to the principal who hired him at St. Augustine.

He had put off earlier wishes to retire, but ultimately, his struggles with diabetes made it hard to summon enough energy to teach afternoon classes, in particular. The 2020-2021 school year was also very difficult because of the challenges associated with distance learning, which included adjusting to Google Classroom and having to accept assignments from students in different formats. Mr. Monzon experienced insomnia earlier in the school year, finding it difficult to sleep, leading him to seek medical assistance.

A native of El Salvador, Mr. Monzon left the Central American nation when he was 20 years old in 1979, earning a scholarship to study in Moldova, then part of the USSR. In early 1980, in addition, he was able to stay for a time in Moscow. It was an opportune time to leave El Salvador, since the country was suffering through a civil war that led to



the assassination by a death squad of St. Oscar Romero, the Archbishop of San Salvador, and prompted the migration of tens of thousands of people to the Washington, D.C., area.

"The country you come to live in can become your home," Mr. Monzon said about the United States, a place where he initially lived in Los Angeles with family members, working at a sweatshop during the recession in the early 1980s, before briefly living in Texas and ultimately coming to the Washington, D.C. area.

Mr. Monzon has lived an interesting life: in addition to teaching, he also worked with individuals experiencing homelessness in Virginia for five years and also cleaned carpets for a time before getting a break at the Pan American Health Organization,

earning a job processing purchasing orders. During retirement, he plans to write his memoir.

Mr. Monzon believes in the power of music and film, in particular, to bring Latin culture to his students and spur interesting discussions. Other teachers remember his classes for the lively music, which might include salsa and bachata tunes, and Mr. Monzon sometimes showed movies to illustrate the experiences of Guatemalan indigenous migrants fleeing civil war, as in the case of *El Norte*, or how ordinary citizens and young people might oppose a dictatorship, such as with the three murdered Mirabal sisters from the Dominican Republic who helped lead an underground resistance in the movie *In the Time of the Butterflies*. He also liked showing the movie *Romero* about St. Oscar Romero, as well as *The Devil's Miner*, about a 14-year old pressed to work in a Bolivian silver mine to support his family.

"I wanted my students to develop social consciousness and analytical skills that would serve them well in high school," he said.

"It is hard to say goodbye," Mr. Monzon said about his final days at St. Augustine. "You don't know how much love there is in a school such as this between the students and teachers."



To celebrate Juneteenth, a Saint Augustine parent teamed up with a local women's football team, the DC Divas, and DC Tours and Transportation to donate 100 sets of ABC flash cards and matching posters to St. Augustine on June 9.

Juneteenth, on June 19, is a federal holiday in the United States commemorating the emancipation of African-American slaves. Ms. Markette Sheppard, the parent of a first grade Saint Augustine student, is a children's book author, and the ABC cards that she created feature a diverse children and images. Established 20 years ago, the DC Divas compete in the Women's Football Alliance. Ms. Sheppard and the DC Divas hope that the card donations will help St. Augustine Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten and First Grade students and their families combat summer learning loss.

Alumni Notes ♦ Alumni Notes ♦ Alumni Notes



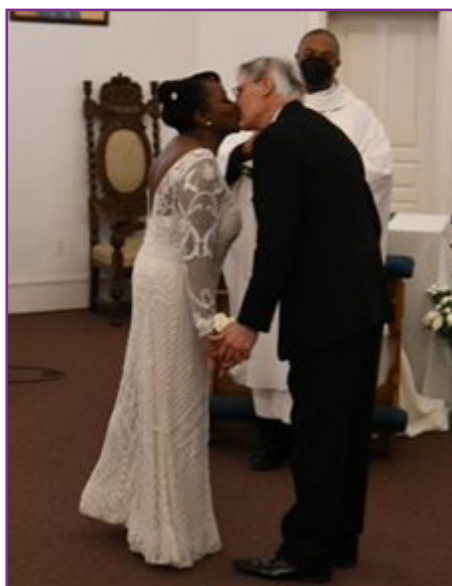
Since her parents Richard and Andrea (Stallworth) Verstraete '71, as well as her aunt, Dr. Monica Stallworth M.D. '66, work in healthcare, Emory Verstraete '13 almost seemed destined to follow in the family business.

But she fought that initial inclination. She earned a degree in Psychology from the University of Pittsburgh in December 2020. She considered earning a Ph.D., focusing on psychological theory, but her brother Robert Verstraete's '10 bike accident in early 2019 changed her perspective on clinical healthcare, the field where her father works, as a nurse, in addition to her mother, who is a nurse practitioner.

Robert, who was not wearing a helmet, suffered head trauma from his bike accident, which occurred as he was commuting to work in the District of Columbia. Seeing neuroscience doctors and intensive care unit nurses at Medstar Washington Hospital Center care for her brother during his recovery impressed Emory and influenced her career choice. The Verstraete family feels very "blessed" that Robert did not suffer any permanent damage from the accident, she said.

After graduating from the University of Pittsburgh, in March, Emory enrolled in an intensive, 11-month bachelor of science in nursing program at Drexel University in Philadelphia, so that she can become a registered nurse. "It's a lot of work," she said of the program. Three times a week, she does clinical work, with two days each week focused on classwork. She plans to graduate from the program in March 2022. She has had to learn how to adjust her time well.

"It helped build me as a person," she said of her Saint Augustine education. She learned how to communicate well

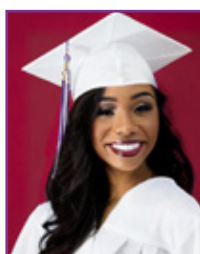


Congratulations

Dr. Monica L. Stallworth, M.D. '66, married Peter Bradley Murdock at the St. Augustine Chapel on February 13, 2021. Rev. Patrick A. Smith, pastor of St. Augustine, witnessed the wedding.

with people there. "In nursing, learning to connect to people and build rapport through communication is important," she said.

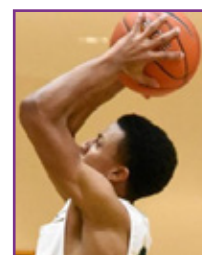
After graduating from St. Augustine and attending Georgetown Visitation for high school, she developed an interest in Korean culture, including K-Pop music, beginning in her junior year, through her friendship with a classmate. This led to her taking a course at the Korean Cultural Center in Washington, D.C., in addition to minoring in Korean, along with Neuroscience, at the University of Pittsburgh.



Laila Flores '17 has graduated from the Academy of the Holy Cross, where she concluded her senior year with a 4.02 overall GPA. She volunteered with the I Support The Girls Organization,

a non-profit that provides donated essential items to domestic and international charities for women. Laila intends to major in Biology/Pre-Med at Xavier University of Louisiana New Orleans as a Presidential Scholarship awardee. She aspires to be a public health physician who focuses on the awareness and prevention of critical health issues impacting underserved and underrepresented Black and Brown communities.

Xavier University, founded by Saint Katharine Drexel and administered by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, is the only Catholic Historically Black College and University in the United States. In fact, since Sister Katharine Drexel was canonized in 2000, Xavier has had the distinction of being the only Catholic university founded by a saint. Xavier University is known for its pre-med program, responsible for placing more African-American students in medical schools in the U.S., and successful pre-health advising program of students.



Brock K. Davis '18 recently completed his junior year at Georgetown Day School, a prep school located in the West End of Washington, D.C.

Brock has grown to be 6'4" and 220 lbs., and he plays on the GDS varsity basketball team as a shooting guard and small forward. Brock's father, Brian Davis, grew to be 6'7" and starred in basketball at Duke University, where he played in four Final Fours and won a National Championship in 1991, before embarking on a professional career in the NBA and France.

DC Mayor Muriel Bowser, in a December 2020, banned high school sports due to the COVID-19 virus, so the Winter basketball season was an unfortunate casualty.

Jacquelyn Thornton retires from elementary school teaching

After 43 years as a teacher, including eight at Saint Augustine, Jacquelyn Thornton retired from the school last month.

Ms. Thornton worked as a Kindergarten, second, fourth, and most recently, third grade teacher during her time at Saint Augustine. She is moving to Hampton Roads, Va., “close to the ocean,” where she plans to work part-time as a substitute teacher for up to two years before retiring.

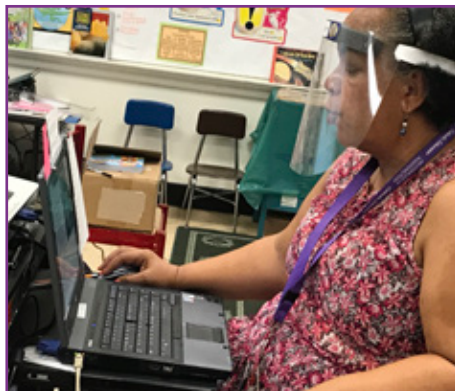
“I will miss the children and my coworkers,” she said. “The opportunity to talk with Fr. Pat, whenever I needed to,” is also an experience she will miss.

The teachers, beginning at the cluster level, help form a “family-like” environment at St. Augustine, she said. “We support each other,” she said, speaking in the present tense after the school year had concluded. She appreciated getting to know her colleagues outside the school, in addition to their work within the school walls. She also liked working with the parents and still has all their phone numbers.

A native Washingtonian who was born at Providence Hospital soon after it opened, she attended St. Martin School off North Capitol Street, N.W., which has since closed. Ms. Thornton’s mother was a principal, and after her mother passed, Ms. Thornton appreciated how the St. Augustine community supported her.

Ms. Thornton’s career included working as a D.C. Public School teacher for 21 years, teaching at a Catholic school in the Bahamas for three years, and teaching at Washington Episcopal School from 1999 to 2013. She is also a parishioner at the Church of the Nativity, N.W.

She felt at home at St. Augustine after she came in 2013, since she found



that alumna and parishioner Donna Gaskins Pasteur, who volunteers at the school, attended the same high school as she did. Mr. Raven Wilkins, Sr., who is now the principal, is someone she knew

when her daughter was a student at Archbishop Carroll High School, where Mr. Wilkins worked before coming to St. Augustine. In addition, she noted that her own family had a pew at the original St. Augustine Church.

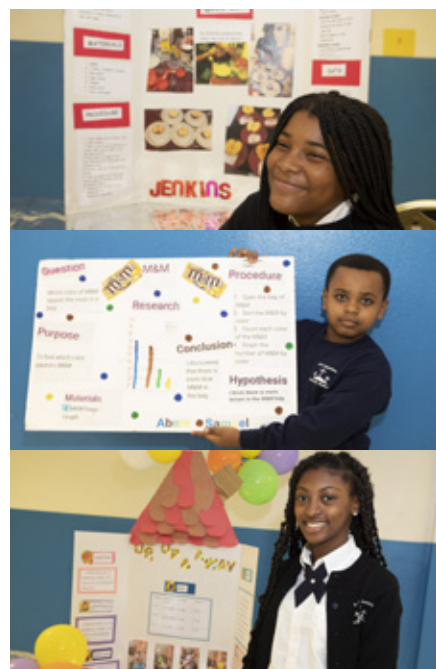
“The children are very unique,” she said of Saint Augustine. “They are culturally diverse. They love each other. I’ve watched them interact with each other.”

Being retired will be a challenging day-to-day adjustment, according to Ms. Thornton, but she looks forward to having more freedom to travel starting this fall.

Science Fair May 25

In the weeks leading up to our annual Science Fair, our student identified a scientific mystery they were interested in solving and used a six-step scientific method in exploring it. Under the direction of Ms. Starre Williams, our Science teacher, students identified a subject they wanted to examine. They conducted targeted Internet and library research to gather background information about their subject. Students then articulated a research question about their subject that they could not answer without doing additional research.

They then formulated a hypothesis, or working thesis, a statement of opinion that could answer the question, and tested it through experimentation and using a laboratory notebook to keep track. They then learned how to account for variables and analyzed their data before drawing revised conclusions about their hypothesis. Some students then produced displays and abstracts summarizing their findings for the Science Fair. Other students



used note cards in preparing for class presentations about their research.

Students learned to use time management and project planning principals in completing their projects. Meanwhile, Ms. Williams helped guide parents in appropriate ways they could assist their children in completing the science project.

Contacting our young alumni

In preparing for this issue, I unexpectedly learned quite a bit about the best ways of contacting the under 30 crowd, as I sought to interview young alumni about their recent exploits for this newsletter issue. I learned these lessons, even though my six children fall in the age range of 15 to 25 years old.

Trying to call them on their cell phones? Not very effective. Texting them on said cell phones? Better. Forget about awkward, unrequited Facebook interactions or emails, since they don't know me like that; regardless, I am a very infrequent user of Facebook, unlike our principal, Mr. Raven A. Wilkins, Sr., a DC native who connects with a lot of longtime friends and family through it and loves posting photos of his son. I could better reach the alumni parents, who like to brag about their children, like most parents. In some cases, I could also reach an alumnus through a sibling or a former teacher.

I found if one means of communication did not work, I had to

DEVELOPMENT CORNER



Bill Murray

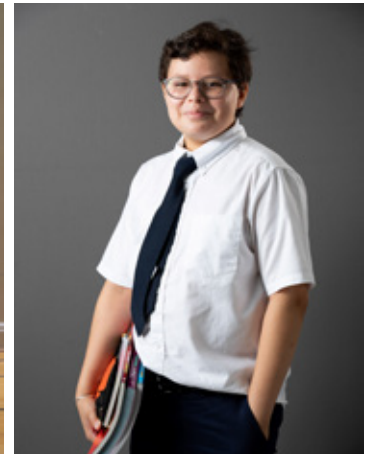
try another. These young alumni stories are too good not to be told, I reminded myself. After all, what distinguishes a school like Saint Augustine is its alumni. They are the products of the school, a proof of its excellence. We have to reach out proactively and find out how they are doing. Some young graduates like to come back to the school to volunteer, attend the annual Christmas performance, or say hello to a former teacher.

Thank you to all who supported Saint Augustine during the 2020-2021 school year. We raised more than \$439,000 through 533 donations from individuals, corporations and foundations, making it one of our best fundraising years ever.

We are very grateful for your support of our students, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when we had to invest more in technology and cleaning our school building. If you would like to support Saint Augustine Catholic School in any way, please contact me at bmurray@saintaugustine-dc.org.

Each successive graduating class, in a sense, writes its own chapter in the story that is Saint Augustine Catholic School, one that began in 1858.

Admissions



Do you have a child who could benefit from a Catholic education?

Saint Augustine Catholic School has 2021-2022 school year openings from Pre-Kindergarten for 3 and 4 years olds through the eighth grade.

In addition to small class sizes, our

school offers Honors Math and Honor Language Arts programs. Our aftercare program includes Basketball, Chess, Fence Club, Girls Scouts, Reading Circle, and Spelling Bee Club. Our high school placement includes Academy of Holy Cross, Bullis, Georgetown Day

School, Georgetown Prep, Georgetown Visitation, Gonzaga, Maret, St. John's, and St. Vincent Pallotti. Financial aid is available.

Please call the school at 202-667-2608 or visit our website at www.staug-dc.org to find more information.

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Correction

In our Winter 2021 newsletter story, "Wilkins becomes St. Augustine principal" (Page 3), we misspelled the first name of Mrs. Lesbern Wilkins. We apologize for the error.



Story ideas for the newsletter? Please contact **Bill Murray** at bmurray@saintaugustine-dc.org.

Would you like to update your address for our records?
Please complete an alumni contact form at www.staug-dc.org/alumni.html.

We welcome inquiries from alumni, former students and anyone interested in our school.