

SAINT AUGUSTINE SAINTS NEWS

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SINCE 1858

Welcome to the
Home of the Saints

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

Time for a Spiritual Check-up

Dear Parents, Faculty, Alumni,
Parishioners and Friends,

Coming off the heels of a successful celebration of Catholic Schools Week, we are fast approaching the Season of Lent which will likely have already started by the time this Newsletter is published. As most of you probably already know, Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. But why do we begin this way? Is reflecting on the fact that I am dust and to dust I will return (see Genesis 3:19) a great way to start anything? It is hardly the kind of thing a coach might say to motivate her team before the championship game or a teacher might say to his class before they take the high school placement test!

On the other hand, if you go to a doctor because you are not feeling well the first question you are likely to get is: "Tell me how you are feeling?" or "What's the problem?" Ash Wednesday gives a blunt answer to that second question, "What's the problem?" The problem is my mortality! No matter what I accomplish in this life, every time I drive past a cemetery I am reminded that I have a

From the Pastor



date with destiny; there is plot there with my name on it... literally! But here is the good news: Ashes is NOT the destiny God has in mind for my future. Jesus never said, "In my Father's cemetery, there are many graves and I have prepared a grave for you!" No, he actually said, "**In my Father's House there are many dwelling places and I have prepared a place for you... so that where I am, you also may be**" (John 14:2-3).

Any good doctor is going to diagnose the problem before telling you the solution and if the problem is really bad and scary the more excited and hope-filled will you be to discover that there is a cure! But you have to take the medicine and follow the doctor's instructions to defeat the disease and be restored to good health.

And that is where the season of Lent comes in. It is a time to do an honest and sobering diagnostic (self-examination) and then take the steps that have been prescribed to improve and ultimately restore us to good spiritual health. Even a brief examination will reveal that I have more than a mortality problem (death) but a *morality* problem (sin). The second option to "You are dust..." for the person placing ashes on our foreheads is "Turn away from sin and believe in the Gospel". The focus of Lent is *relationship restoration* and sin is what sabotages relationships. Of course, we all make mistakes. But sometimes it's worse than that. Sometimes we are intentionally unkind, selfish, greedy,

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From the President's Desk



Glory to God for his mercy and love!

This newsletter includes lots of examples of God's unfailing love in our school community.

MAP Growth Testing: Many of our students showed great improvement in Reading and Mathematics, compared

to last year's results. We thank all of our teachers and students for their dedication and hard work.

Catholic Schools Week: It was faith-filled, exciting, and fun Catholic Schools Week. It ended on Sunday, February 5 at the 10:00 a.m. Mass. We celebrated with a soccer and basketball game between Saint Augustine Sunday School and Saint Augustine Catholic School.

Enrollment: Saint Augustine is working to increase enrollment in its wonderful parish school for the 2023-2024 school year, working with prospective parents, while encouraging existing parents to reenroll for the upcoming academic year.

Field Trips: Saint Augustine students and teachers enjoyed two field trips during the month of

February. Grades Three through Five attended an event at the Washington Sports Arena, which highlighted "Black Accomplishments in Sports" during Black History Month. Grades 3 through 6 enjoyed Skate Zone, where students took part in a unique educational experience. Students learned how the concepts of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math can be found in our everyday experiences, even in roller skating.

We at Saint Augustine Catholic School would like to thank all of our sponsors, donors, parishioners, parents, teachers, and wonderful students helping us make this school year such a wonderful experience. We continue to walk by faith, not by sight.

Sister Emmanuella Ladipo, HHCJ

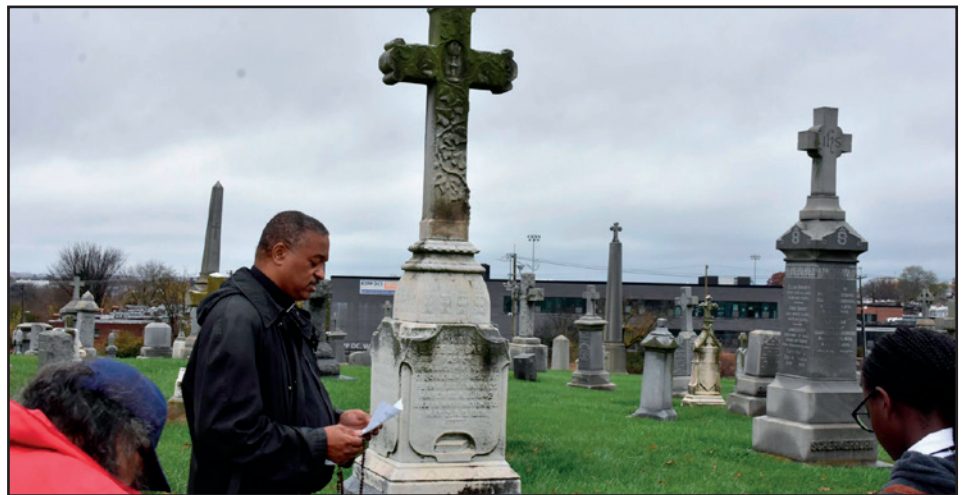
Paying our respects

In November, a month when Catholics pray for the repose of the souls of those who passed before us, Ms. Dena Grant '76, a lifelong parishioner, came up with a practical way to help a small group of St. Augustine School students learn about the parish's history.

They visited the gravesite of Fr. Felix Barotti, a missionary priest from Italy who had served as the first pastor of St. Augustine Church, at Mt. Olivet Cemetery, N.E.

Ms. Grant, the parish archivist, was joined by Jacques Benovil, parish photographer, Fr. Patrick A. Smith, pastor, and a small group of students, including Nalleti Otieno, an eighth grader.

Fr. Barotti was assigned as the first pastor of St. Augustine Catholic Church by Archbishop Martin Spalding



of Baltimore, in 1867, after the chapel that housed St. Augustine Church was built on Fifteenth Street, N.W., between L and M Streets. St. Augustine came to be from Blessed Martin de Porres Chapel in the basement of St. Matthew's Church (later Cathedral), beginning in 1858.

Fr. Barotti died in 1881 at the age

of 43, and his remains were laid to rest at Mt. Olivet Cemetery, where he had purchased plots for parishioners from St. Augustine during a time when cemeteries were segregated.

The group prayed at Fr. Barotti's graveyard, as well as the markers for St. Augustine parishioners buried in his section of the cemetery.

Catholic Schools Week (Jan. 29 - Feb. 4)

Catholic Schools Week started off with our presence at the Jan. 29 10 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Masses at Saint Augustine Catholic Church. Our student choir, under the direction of Mr. Marvin Ford, music teacher performed. Our students brought up offertory gifts and served as lectors, with images of Black Catholic candidates for sainthood in the Catholic Church, such as Sister Thea Bowman, adorning the altar. We also held several spelling bees, including ones themed around Religion, with classes segregated by cluster (e.g. Grades 3 to 5 and 6 through 8). We also engaged in Corporal Works of Mercy by preparing sandwiches to feed the homeless.



Mr. Marvin Ford, Music teacher



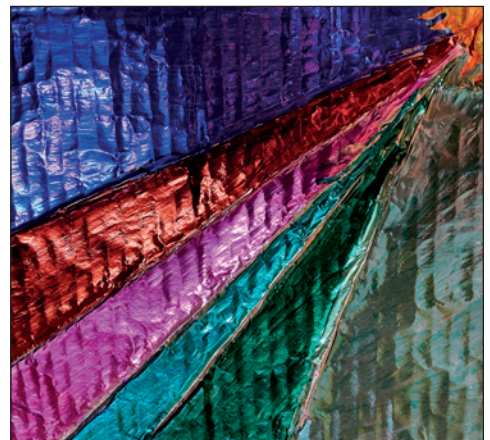
Feeding the Homeless



Mass Lector



Sister Emmanuella accompanies a student at Mass



Stained Glass by Nalletti Otieno



Spelling Bee



During Black History Month, our PK through First Grade students learned about Jackie Robinson, the Hall of Fame infielder who integrated Major League Baseball in 1947. Here, our PreK students draw pictures of the Brooklyn Dodgers #42.

Giving thanks for your generosity

Bill Murray

The 2022-2023 School Year has been a very fruitful one for Saint Augustine Catholic School's fundraising. We had very strong year-end giving, and as of this writing, we had received more than \$270,000 through more than 300 donations and grants since July 1, 2022.

We're very grateful for your response to our appeals. Our pastor, Fr. Patrick A. Smith, announced from the pulpit during weekend Mass and through the weekly Flocknotes email communications to parishioners that we needed to add 10 donors who were willing to pledge \$5,000 a year over five years, so that our total number of such donors rose to 25. Thankfully, you responded, and we have reached our goal.

We've had three of our donors, all of them parishioners, let us know that they would extend their \$5,000 a year pledges past five years, and we appreciate their continued faith in us. We know that you have many options to give, and we appreciate your keeping us in mind. It reminds me of St. Teresa of Calcutta's saying, "Give until it hurts," as well as Fr. Smith's additional exhortation, "Give 'til it feels good!"

Fr. Smith will be asking parishioners to increase giving toward the monthly offertory collection benefitting our parish school. We appreciate anything you can do to help buttress our school.

For our part, we are working very hard to generate higher returns. We are submitting nearly double the foundation grant applications we did during the 2021-2022, and we are confident this extra effort will produce more results.

At the urging of the Parish Finance Council, we plan to redouble our efforts this fall at encouraging our friends who work for the federal government,

Development Corner



the District government and other employers that participate in the CFC (#20000) and United Way (#9637) programs to consider designating Saint Augustine School as a beneficiary.

I am also pursuing grants that can assist with the parish's capital repair needs. In December, for example,

with the assistance of Fr. Smith, we submitted our first letter of introduction to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, requesting a grant to help us replace the window at the parish's Gingras Ecumenical Center.

We are also hosting a Planned Giving seminar for parishioners and friends conducted by Archdiocese of Washington's director of donor relations and gift planning, Ms. Joanne Pipkin, on Sunday, March 19, with two sessions, at 9:15 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.

Thank you for partnering with us. Please let me know if you have any questions or know of any additional foundations that could support our mission. We welcome you to visit the school to see our students and staff in action. You can reach me at bmurray@saintaugustine-dc.org.

Bill Murray



Gregory F. Bearstop '79 earned a doctorate in Healthcare Administration from Virginia University at Lynchburg on Aug. 27, 2022. "I am so grateful to the education from St. Augustine's Catholic School which was the foundation that made my dream come true. I want to thank God, St. Augustine's School, Parishioners, and the support and prayers that allowed me, a kid baptized and nurtured by St. Augustine's Church and community, to attain a goal that wouldn't have been possible without Catholic education," he wrote. Dr. Bearstop serves as the chief of the Inmate Services Division for Prince George's County

Science Report

Ms. Angela Knox

We are continuing our study of scientific exploration and inquiry. In the primary grades (PK through second grade), our main focus was the proper use scientific instruments and their actual names. In intermediate (third through fifth grades) as well as middle school (sixth through eighth grades), we are studying global issues such as the health effects caused by pollution and recycling.

Students in all grades have been challenged to bring in clean, recyclable materials (plastics, aluminum, paper, and glass) to either their homeroom teacher or directly to the Science classroom. These items are recorded and disposed of by our Environmental/Recycling Club on Wednesdays after school. The ERC has placed recycling boxes around the school to collect items that students use during the day.

Ms. Knox is the school's Science teacher.



New PreK Aide

Saint Augustine Catholic School has hired Ms. Taylor Simpson as a Pre-Kindergarten aide. Ms. Simpson worked with Ms. Nikki Harris as a PreK aide teaching Math, Reading, and Science during the 2022 St. Augustine Summer School.



Ms. Simpson is an alumna of the State University of New York College at Oswego, earning her bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice in May 2022. She has served as an intern with the Department of Justice, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and Urban Alliance.

According to Sister Emmanuella Ladipo, HHCJ, acting principal, Ms. Simpson brings a solid set of skills to our school and is a welcome addition to our faculty.

In other school staff news, Chef Flor Ramirez has returned to the school and is cooking delicious, healthy meals for our students again.

Science Fair Judges Sought

Saint Augustine Catholic School is seeking judges for its annual Science Fair on April 4.

Judges would need to be available for a 90-minute block from either 10:30 am to 12 noon, or 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm, or both, on Tuesday, April 4. There would be some writing involved and interviewing students about their projects. People from all career fields are requested and encouraged. If anyone is interested, please email our Science teacher, Ms. Angela Knox, at aknox@saintaugustine-dc.org for more details.

Christmas show highlights

All classes participated in the annual Saint Augustine Catholic School Christmas Show on Monday, December 19, a day before Christmas break began.

With the theme, "What Christmas Means to Me," the Nativity production music was arranged by Mr. Marvin Ford, music teacher and pianist, his first Christmas production since he returned to St. Augustine in 2019. He also wrote the script. Each teacher was asked to solicit ideas from her students about what Christmas means to them, and Ford integrated these ideas into the production.

"Every child participated," Ford said.

The production in a darkened St. Augustine Room, draped in white for most of the space, including the stage, while the back was draped in blue. The 40-member student choir, members carrying candles, then sang, "O Come, O Come Emanuel." Once lighting in the back of the St. Augustine Room came on, the room was designed to appear like a Winter wonderland.

The production centered its theme on what Christmas means to each child.

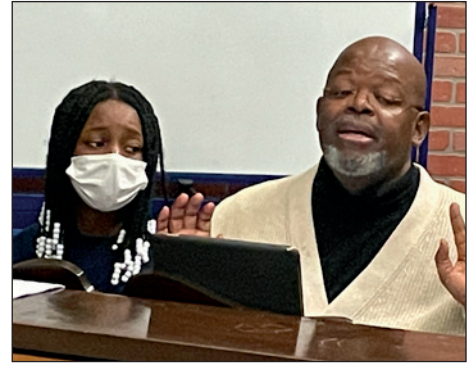


The entire production was narrated by three middle school students dressed as angels.

Pre-Kindergarten students sang "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," while Kindergarten students performed "Christmas Eve in Washington" song.

Meanwhile, the first-grade students brilliantly recited the song, "The Names of Jesus." The second and third grade students combined, meanwhile, to sing "Mary Did You Know." Dressed in street close with red and green colors, fourth graders sang, "We Are the Reason."

Dressed in black and white, the fifth-grade students sang, "The 12 Days of Christmas," with each member of the class dressed as an item of the song



Marvin Ford teaches a Music class in November, as a student looks on.

with appropriate props. Sixth graders, meanwhile, performed "A Modern Day Nativity," demonstrating how the story of Jesus' birth finds a new place with each generation. The seventh-grade students sang, "Christmas Our Way."

Eighth graders performed a Nativity scene, finally, including Mary and Joseph, shepherds and Magi (the three kings). They sang "Silent Night," featuring Maiyah Marshall choreographed by Princess Moon.

Guests at the production included the pastor of Nativity Catholic Church, Fr. Pawel Sass, a native of Poland, who sat with Fr. Patrick A. Smith, St. Augustine's pastor since 2004.

Why I Like (or Love) Saint Augustine School

"I love St. Augustine Catholic School because the teachers are good at teaching us, which makes us learn new things."

—Naomi Twelde, Fifth Grade

"I like St. Augustine School because of the education there helped me become a better student."

—Chinecherem Joseph, Fifth Grade

"I like my Catholic school because I learn a lot of things."

—Wesley Sheppard, Third Grade

"I love St. Augustine Catholic School because we celebrate Mass every Friday. Our celebration of Mass helps our religious life. If someone lives far from a church, they can attend our school Mass. Finally, a chosen class is selected each week to host the Mass. That's so cool!"

—Nathanya Kidane, Fifth Grade

Art teacher makes a quick impact

It's difficult for visitors to Saint Augustine Catholic School, as well as the school's students, not to feel the infectious love of art of Ms. Malika Bryant, the school's first-year art teacher. Her bright smile can light up a room, and she likes to show off the artwork she and her students have created.

"I fell in love with art when I was four," she recounts of growing up in Philadelphia. She describes art as her "best friend."

It took her a number of years before she became an art teacher, since she first began working in corporate environments. Her mother gave birth to her at a young age, and Ms. Bryant also became a mother at an early age. Over time, she came to realize that she needed more education to advance her career.

In 2012, as her daughter Destiny was going off to college, Ms. Bryant earned her bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education from Ashford University, where she took online classes, after taking general studies class at Montgomery College and further classes at Howard University, where she worked.

During those years, other people began observing that Bryant seemed to have a heaviness to her. "You wear depression like clothes," one woman told her. Over time, Bryant began focusing on gratitude, including being thankful for what seem like basic necessities, such as food, life, and shelter. Rather than focusing on negative thoughts, she came to put more emphasis on positive ones. Over time, other people began noticing how Bryant's countenance changed.

In 2018, in addition, she stopped eating meat, which she describes as a turning point in her life.



She came to St. Augustine after teaching at a Montessori school, in addition to DCPS and two DC public charter schools.

She describes Saint Augustine School, where she works from Wednesday through Friday each week, as "friendly, very family oriented."

Students that didn't really have a lot of art seem disappointed when Art class gets cancelled or curtailed, Ms. Bryant said. "They don't have to be perfect to make a masterpiece."

Bryant tries to encourage her students' innate creativity to come out through art. Working with one student, for example, Bryant encouraged the child's artwork and saw her potential. Over time, the child's mother told Bryant about how the teacher's encouraging words were positively impacting her daughter, to the point that the child plan to apply to a magnet high school that focuses on the arts.

"This life is meant to be lived," Bryant said. She describes herself as a "spiritual person" who is loving, kind, empathetic, and "filled with love," meant to be shared with others. She feels her God's presence at St. Augustine Church, conscious of previous generations of African-Americans who have built up and worshipped at the church.

"Positive Attitude Changes

Everything," is a saying she has adopted from Sister Emmanuella Ladipo, HHCJ, president of Saint Augustine.

"I tell my daughter, 'Be better than me,'" Bryant said. She is proud that her daughter Destiny has graduated from Morgan State University. "She is a dear, sweet child," she said of her daughter. "She has taught me patience and to be in the moment."

Continued from page 1

From the Pastor

unjust, unfair, dishonest, indifferent, deceitful, disrespectful, mean, abusive and even violent. These don't count as mistakes. These are sins that can wound and even destroy lives and relationships – whether with God or each other. Honest admission of my faults, sincere regret, remorse and repentance are in order if relationships are to be salvage, restored and renewed. So, don't shun these, embrace them this Lent! ***The season of Lent is a gift, a moment of grace and an invitation to engage in this work of repairing, restoring and renewing our relationship with God and one another.*** Remember, you are not taking these steps alone. Christians across the globe are making this journey with you. So, let's get started today!

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Patrick A. Smith
Pastor

In Memoriam

Anita Harewood

Jean Makle '74

May the souls of the faithfully departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

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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.