

Joy to the World!

Nothing really compares to the Advent Season



HO HO HOLY SHEPHERDS THIS ARTICLE IS LONG!

- There are some important announcements and dates below that will impact every single parent. Feel free to skip my Christmas card reflection and get to the facts below if you're a skim reader. We will have more information on each one of these topics in the coming weeks!

MY CHRISTMAS CARD

Being joyful can be hard work. We generally assume that the mood we're in is a direct result of the life going on around us. That's true in some cases, but our disposition may simply reflect patterns of behavior or qualities we've worked hard to develop. Sometimes it's a combination of both. But you almost have to "work" at not being joyful this time of the year, especially if you work in a school. The K-3 and 4-6 programs were packed with parents and grandparents. Cars were parked for blocks. You can't help but catch some of the students' (and teachers') enthusiasm for the break.

Hopefully, all of our school community will get some time to be joyful during the season. There's nothing worse than being angry or sad most of the time. Life deals us some blows, but we are also gifted with many blessings. Mourning loved ones is also part of the Advent and Christmas season, but mourning or sadness isn't the same as being cynical, angry or bitter. One of my parent to kid clichés was that you really don't know who people are until they disagree, lose or don't get their way. That tends to bring out the worst in all of us. But this season gives us all an opportunity to be thankful and appreciative for our places of employment or homes, and for all the people entrusted to our care. It should be a time we can work on the things that make us more joyful and less stressful. So my wish for all of you is that you get to spend some time with loved ones and that there's plenty of time for laughter during the holidays. May we come out of this season with lives that reflect a spirit of kindness, optimism and hope!

BUDGETS

- Stephanie Snyder, our Controller, inherited a new accounting software package last summer and has worked tirelessly to reconstruct two years of budget/expense numbers. The first order of business in the New Year will be getting a budget recommendation to the Finance Committee on January 8th and to the Education Advisory Committee shortly thereafter. We know the sacrifice that families and parishes are making for their Catholic School Education. We're making every effort to keep the process as affordable and efficient as possible.

THE NICE LIST REGISTERS IN MARCH

- OCS K-12 online registration for the 2019-20 year will begin March 11th to March 29th. The good news is that we spent a lot of time simplifying the on-line registration process. You'll find the health questions all populated now with previous answers, so if no health issues have developed, these questions will take no time at all. Several other on-line changes were made to simplify the registration process. But there's more good news. For the first three weeks of registration (March 11-29) there is **NO** registration fee! But there's a catch. If you wait and choose to register during the month of April or May, then there is a \$200 registration fee. After June there is a \$300 registration fee. Late registrations create a tremendous amount of expense and havoc on the budget. We will send out a LOT of reminders, but the March dates will give us critical information to make wise decisions for the upcoming year.
- The Family Financial Assistance Program (FACTS) registration will start February 4th through the 15th. About one third of our families qualify for assistance. It will be imperative that families who would like to apply for financial aid do this EARLY. We will have an absolute cutoff date for late families. If you need assistance, please do not hesitate to call us. We want to help. The number is 270-686-8896.

SCRIP THE SEASON

- We're consolidating some of the current sources of revenue (Scrip goals, fees that impact every family) to tuition. This will not increase revenue, nor will it increase your out-of-pocket. That means there will be NO Scrip goals. However, Scrip will remain and 70% of all Scrip rebates will go to designated family tuitions. We will have to run Scrip on 30% of the revenue generated to make it a break even. Remember, Scrip does NOT generate a penny of income for the Owensboro Catholic School System. It is a FREE service that we administer to assist parents and parishes with their Catholic School Tuition. Remember that a third of our families make less than \$50,000 in total household income and the education is approaching a cost of \$9,000 per student. So the parishes provide generous support and then we continually raise money to provide additional tuition assistance for families. Scrip is a great way for families to help themselves or help others.

THE GRINCH

- The most difficult and least rewarding part of administration is collecting tuition payments that get behind. We will give families every single opportunity to make financial arrangements with the system. We will respond to needs with respect, confidentiality and generosity. However, when families fail to meet their commitments and then fail to communicate, they will be asked to exit the system. We depend on families to meet their commitments unless they have financial circumstances that have changed. But we need to have an open line of communication and we must be notified if someone is going to miss a payment. If Catholic families are NOT attending weekly Mass, parishes are pulling their sponsorships. We all must be accountable for the decisions we make and the commitments we make.

DUALING CREDITS

- It's very important for parents to know more about the changing landscape in secondary education and how it will uniquely impact students. Not all of the changes are positive. There's nothing new about high school students taking college credit classes. However, there is a push to get "as many" dual credit classes in a high school curriculum as possible. There are many educators who think this trend could actually "dilute" some core

classes that are essential to an outstanding higher education experience and it may lower test scores and even eliminate a student's senior year in high school. Many credits beyond 30 hours may not even count toward college. Catholic High has always had a program that allowed college credit and has improved on an excellent program that could allow as many as 30 hours of college credit, all taught at Owensboro Catholic High School. This gives students the full high school experience before moving on to college. We will accomplish this without sacrificing our attention to the standardized test scores, which are the mark of excellence. So parents will need to do more planning with their children. We are scheduling educational sessions in the New Year.

ADMISSIONS

- We're stepping up our efforts to educate young parents on the value of the Catholic School System. We're going to do this through a strategic admissions effort. Owensboro Catholic Schools are an academic success that also ministers to the spirit of every child. A child's best opportunity for a fulfilled life will not just come from academic excellence. Many great academics underperform in the workplace and at home. Students need to learn disappointment, hard work, consequences for choices, dealing with bad breaks and they need a very intimate relationship to Christ and the Church. The most important contribution we make to their lives is how we teach the tenets of our faith. They receive daily exposure to prayer, community and Catholic Church teachings. It is an invaluable sacrifice for the community and we work to maximize these gifts as an organization. No individual ever does that perfectly. But we also teach forgiveness and accountability. We try to practice it as well.

AMAZON SMILE

- No Catholic School article is complete if we don't have one more fundraising opportunity. Purchase your goods through Amazon Smile ([Smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)). Select "Owensboro Catholic Schools" from the list of charities and we get a contribution on purchases!

Merry Christmas to the Catholic School Community. We're looking forward to another great New Year!