

St. Raphael's brightest season brings renewed faith and tradition

By Gabriela Herrera Gugiu

Christmas is always a special time at St. Raphael School, and this year was no different. The SRS community embraced its virtual platforms to instill new traditions that are sure to stand the test of time.

Led by our Home & School Association, a dedicated team of helpers created the 12 Days of a St. Raphael Christmas – a series of 12 different events throughout December that celebrated all that is St. Raphael and all that is Christmas. The festivities included cookie decorating, a special bedtime reading of “’Twas the Night Before Christmas” by Principal Teri Dwyer, a jolly letters for Santa drive-through, and much more as we celebrated the season as a St. Raphael family – with the parish



Santa and his elves spread holiday cheer at St. Raphael School and Nursery School's festive letters for Santa drive-through. Photos by MJ Zafis-Garcia

and Raphael House included. The festivities ended with a community-wide tour of decorated school families' homes. A mobile app guided participants from house to house,

where selfies and prizes were included.

December 16 and 17 would have been the last two days of classes before Christmas break, but Mother

Nature had other plans by sending us back-to-back Snow Days. St. Raphael returned to virtual school on January 4 and in-person classes on January 11.

For this year's Catholic Schools Week, the National Catholic Educational Association chose the

Continued on page 36

St Raphael School News

Registration is Open

St. Raphael Nursery School (preschool) enrollment for 2021-22 opened on Jan. 15. SRNS has programs for 3-year-olds, 4-year-olds, and 4-Plus (Pre-K).

St. Raphael School (K-8) enrollment for 2021-22 is also open. SRS—a 2019 National Blue Ribbon School—specializes in tailored academics through small-group instruction,

integrated technology (including one-to-one iPads for middle-schoolers), and differentiated learning.

Upcoming Events

Catholic Schools Week – Feb. 1-5

MONDAY (Feb. 1): Parent Appreciation Day

TUESDAY (Feb. 2): Teacher & Staff Appreciation Day

WEDNESDAY (Feb. 3): Student Appreciation Day and Career Day

THURSDAY (Feb. 4): Clergy Appreciation Day

FRIDAY (Feb. 5): Family Fun Night

For information about these and other events, visit www.straphaelschoolmd.org.

OPT

St. Raphael Parish St. Raphael School

1513 Dunster Road, Rockville, MD

Rev. Michael Salah, Pastor

Teri Dwyer, Principal

MJ Zafis-Garcia, OPT Editor

301-762-2143

www.straphaels.org

www.straphaelschoolmd.org

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram:
@SRSRockville



GEORGETOWN PREPARATORY SCHOOL



MIND



BODY



SPIRIT

GEORGETOWN PREP CELEBRATES CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

Georgetown Prep, an independent, Jesuit college-preparatory school for young men in grades 9-12, is part of a rich tradition of Catholic education in America since 1634 and is the oldest Jesuit secondary school in the country. Prep's 90-acre campus features state-of-the-art academic, athletic and student centers, small classes and a rigorous curriculum that has helped graduates earn admission to the world's best colleges and universities.

FORMING MEN FOR
OTHERS SINCE 1789



As part of the “12 Days of a St. Raphael Christmas,” SRS and SRNS families enjoy the spirit of the season by baking cookies together and sharing their masterpieces on Zoom. Photo by Natalie Coene

St RAPHAEL

Con't from page 19

theme “Faith. Excellence. Service.” At SRS, this theme rings especially true with the abundance of lessons learned in a community bound by faith and service.

“Celebrating Catholic Schools Week helps us remember the gift of courage, resilience, and growth that this year has represented for our

school,” said Teri Dwyer, principal. “Through small acts of kindness and big acts of leadership, we continue the growth mindset we seek to develop for our students and community.”

SRS is one of 91 Catholic elementary schools, high schools, and early-childhood centers in the Archdiocese of Washington, which serves approximately 25,000 students.

OPT

Executive Order Signed All Persons Now to Be Included in Census and Apportionment

On January 20, 2021, President Joe Biden signed an executive order requiring all U.S. residents to be counted in the U.S. census and reversed the prior administration’s unprecedented policy of excluding undocumented immigrants from the apportionment base. In addition to apportionment of congressional representatives, the decennial census impacts the allocation of hundreds of billions of dollars in federal appropriations for programs designed to uphold human dignity and advance the common good.

Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, and Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, auxiliary bishop of Washington and chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Migration, issued the following statement:

“We welcome this return to more than a century of American precedent that ensures all residents will be counted and included in the

census and apportionment. This return to our previous policy reflects the inalienable truth that all people matter and are imbued with human dignity. In the words of Pope Francis, we are all ‘fellow travelers sharing the same flesh.’

“While the process of counting persons in the United States for the purposes of apportioning seats in the U.S. House of Representatives has not always been free of injustice—the Three-Fifths Compromise being a noteworthy example—Wednesday’s executive order stands as a testament to the indisputable reality that immigration status does not negate the inherent value of a human life, nor should it undermine any person’s ability to contribute to the growth and wellbeing of our nation. Citizens and noncitizens alike must continue to be recognized as members of the same human family.”

The *amicus curiae* brief submitted by the USCCB in the recent Supreme Court case addressing this issue, *Trump v. New York*, is available at: www.usccb.org.

OPT

2021 Holy Land Coordination Communiqué

Representatives of bishops’ conferences from several countries, including the United States, met for the annual Holy Land Coordination (HLC), January 16-20, 2021. Bishop David J. Malloy of Rockford, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on International Justice and Peace represented the U.S. bishops.

For over two decades the HLC has been an intentional means for bishops of several countries to coordinate their interest and involvement in the life of the Church in the Holy Land, the land Christ called home.

Because of the limitations prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the gathering was constrained to meeting virtually this year. Nevertheless, the HLC continues to call for prayer, pilgrimage, and persuasion on behalf of Christians in the region and the ongoing Israeli and Palestinian conflict.

The full communiqué can be read here:

Holy Land Coordination 2021 Final Communiqué

This is the first time we have been prevented from meeting physically in the Holy Land. Yet we remain resolutely committed to supporting our sisters and brothers in the homeland of Christ. Over the past week we have been privileged and moved to hear from Christians across the West Bank, Gaza and Israel about

their mission, resilience and witness in these unprecedented circumstances.

Through our dialogue, it has become painfully clear that there is today less cause for optimism than at any time in recent history.

The health challenges of Covid-19, felt by the entire world, are compounded by conflict, occupation and blockade.

The absence of international pilgrims has exacerbated widespread economic hardship, increased levels of unemployment and pushed many more families into poverty.

The lack of political progress, along with relentless expansion of illegal settlements and the impact of Israel’s Nation-State law, continues to erode any prospect of a peaceful two-state solution.

Now is a critical moment for us all to strengthen our expression of solidarity with the people of the Holy Land “not as a vague sentiment but as a ‘firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good.’”

We stress the importance of the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships recommitting to direct negotiations. We call upon our own governments and political leaders urgently to renew their active participation in the search for a just peace, supporting dialogue between all sides, upholding international law, and reaffirming the plurality of Jerusalem, given its unique significance for Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Furthermore, the interna-

tional community must hold Israel accountable for its moral, legal and humanitarian responsibility to make Covid-19 vaccines accessible for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, and encourage cooperation by the Palestinian Authority, heeding Pope Francis’ message that “in the face of a challenge that knows no borders, we cannot erect walls.”

While many of our own countries continue to face severe hardship amid the pandemic, we have a profound responsibility to support our fellow Christians in the Holy Land. Church schools, clinics, hospitals and other social projects including the work of Caritas, while under severe pressure, are models of charity, justice, and peace. These Christian institutions are vital in bringing together people from many different backgrounds to serve the common good of all.

The Christian community, though small, is an important guarantor of social cohesion and a bearer of hope for a better future. We eagerly await a time when Christians from across the world can once again make pilgrimages to the Holy Land to witness and support this firsthand. Until that point, we encourage our communities to provide any assistance that may be possible and hold all the region’s peoples in our prayers.

OPT

Bishops Welcome New Administration’s Commitment to DACA and Immigration Reform

On the day of his inauguration, President Joe Biden issued a Memorandum preserving and fortifying the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. The DACA program was implemented in 2012 and has enabled approximately 800,000 young people, who paid a fee and submitted to a background check, the opportunity to work legally, access educational opportunities and not fear deportation. It has been estimated that DACA recipients on average contribute over \$42 billion annually to the U.S. economy. Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles and president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, auxiliary bishop of Washington and chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Migration issued the following statement:

“We welcome the announcement preserving and fortifying DACA. For years, DACA youth have been enriching our country. They are

contributors to our economy, veterans of our military, academic standouts in our universities, and leaders in our parishes and communities. They and their families deserve certainty, compassion, generosity, and justice.

“We applaud President Biden’s restoration of the DACA program, and we also strongly encourage him and the U.S. Congress to immediately enact legislation that provides a path to citizenship for Dreamers. Permanent legislative protection that overcomes partisanship and puts the human dignity and future of Dreamers first is long overdue.

“Protection for Dreamers should only be the first step in the systematic reform of our outdated immigration laws. Now is the time to move forward in a bipartisan manner to fix our broken immigration system.

“We also welcome the President’s efforts to immediately produce an immigration reform bill and look forward to reviewing it. We con-

tinue to call for immigration reform which provides a path to citizenship for Dreamers and the undocumented, upholds family-based immigration, honors due process and the rule of law, recognizes the contributions of workers, protects the vulnerable fleeing persecution, and addresses the root causes of migration.

“We stand ready to work with President Biden and his Administration, as well as the U.S. Congress on this urgent matter of human life and dignity.”

For more information and resources on DACA, please see <https://justiceforimmigrants.org/what-we-are-working-on/immigration/daca-resource-page>.

For more information on immigration reform please visit the Justice for Immigrants website: <https://justiceforimmigrants.org/what-we-are-working-on/immigration/>

OPT



The Youth Rally and Mass for Life will be an online only event on January 29, 2021. Visit: <https://youthrallyandmassforlife.org/>