Dear Alumni and Friends,

As we begin our Lenten journey from the ashes of our broken promises (Ash Wednesday) to the glory of the church brought to life at Pentecost, my thoughts go out to Francis our Pope, at once Jesuit and Franciscan and every person’s Pope, and how our parish and school fit into his vision for the Church.

The Pope has said he wants “a poor church for poor people,” and thinks of the Church as “a field hospital in the middle of a battle zone.” In both images, I believe, he wants us to focus on the incomparable riches in Jesus Christ, and the fact that in the Church we come by faith into contact with the same power that raised Jesus from the dead! And because our Holy Father, in his visits around the world seems to be in the habit of adding schools to his public itinerary, it is not too much to think that for him education means formation in Christ, God’s work here.

Scripture has it that “a three ply cord is not easily broken,” and our Benedictine roots, our Franciscan openness, and our parish base is a strong cord indeed. For 93 years we have been faithful to this place, and welcoming all children passing through Brookland on their way to glory, children of every nation and race and people and tongue. This we do in obedience to God’s calling to proclaim and enact the Gospel, primarily as their servant leaders in ongoing conversion of life.

Equipping our students is more challenging financially than ever with the simple aging of our physical plant. In 2017 we will celebrate simultaneously the 125th anniversary of the parish, the 100th anniversary of Margot Hall, and the 95th anniversary of the grade school. Need I add that the main church building will then be 78 years young? In the short term we hope to completely rehabilitate Margot Hall, and then the cafeteria, but the rest of the buildings may be beyond that. The Consortium of Catholic Academies commissioned a study of the prospects of its four schools, and concluded that for many reasons, not least of which is our strong tradition of Alumni/ae contributions, that St. Anthony School was in the best position to weather whatever storms might be on the horizon. Their one caveat was the state of our physical plant. Soon, we hope, the Consortium will launch a Capital Campaign to address some of these challenges, but I don’t want to wait for somebody else to do something, I come to you first because you are so generous, but also because the need is so great, and I have no one else to ask.

If you wish, you can help us! If each of our graduates and friends would donate just “a dollar a day” to this school we all believe in, it could continue to equip Saints for the work of ministry for the next one hundred years! When all is said and done, what else is there? Or, where would you be without St. Anthony?

As we enter Lent, and prepare for Easter and Pentecost, let me close again with the attitude toward the future that we have always imparted to our students, quoting Pope Saint John Paul II: “The future for us remains an unknown quantity, which we now accept without anxiety. Love has overcome anxiety. The future depends on love.” A Blessed Lent, Easter and Pentecost, to you all!

Peace and Love,

Fr. Fred
Much-loved Pre-K teacher anchors early childhood program

Now in her 22nd year at St. Anthony, Kathleen Downey receives not only a steady stream of visits from parents whose children she taught, but she also occasionally teachers the children of former students.

She is the longest tenured staff member at St. Anthony Catholic School, along with Mr. Frank Washington, art teacher, and Mrs. Joan Nolte, librarian. They have served side by side with a handful of principals, the Benedictine Sisters, and other greats, including, Mrs. Lorraine Alexander, Mr. John Devereaux, the late Ms. Lorraine Ferris, and Mr. Wayne Straight. The late Sister Alice Kelley, O.S.B., former St. Anthony principal, served as Downey’s first teacher’s aide.

“I’m friends with a lot of the parents,” Downey said. This only seems possible since the nature of early childhood education appears to obviate the need for grading and strict objectivity by teachers. “They come back to visit. Students from college have also come back to visit. I’m teaching a lot of family members,” of students she taught before, Downey said.

Hired by former principal Ms. Luray Greenwell, who was a neighbor of hers at the time in College Park, Md., Downey initially worked part-time in the aftercare program, while she was attending Bowie State University, studying to receive a Master’s in Guidance and Counseling. After a year or two, Downey was hired full-time to teach Pre-K.

“I love it here,” Downey said. “The little people, they keep me young. They’re loving. Their minds are like sponges.” Ms. LaShawne Thomas, long-time instructional assistant, teaches PreK(4) with Downey.

Pre-K is a child’s first introduction to school and often from being away from his or her parents for a full day. Getting used to school uniforms, daily prayer, and even homework are all adjustments. Thus, the four year old’s relationship with his or her teacher is so significant.

In addition to her classroom duties, Downey also serves as the primary level chair and the co-moderator of the St. Anthony Student Council.

One could say that she had better love her job, since she commutes one hour each way to Brookland from her home on Kent Island on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. “I leave early,” she said. “The ride’s never bothered me. It’s when I do my planning.”

She grows up in College Park with three younger brothers and attended St. Mark School in Hyattsville for her elementary school education before being in the last class to graduate from Regina High School. Sadly, St. Mark no longer exists, after its merger with St. Camillus School in Silver Spring to form St. Francis International School. She holds a bachelor’s degree from Trinity University Washington in Public Communications and Theology.

Known among her fellow staff members as a big Washington Capitals fan, Downey describes herself as a tomboy. She operates a disc jockey entertainment business with her brother Joe, and they usually perform at weddings.

To those who know Ms. Kathleen, they know her door is always open to welcome alumni and parents. Next time you’re in Brookland, drop by and pay a visit!

Alumna and Interim Music Teacher, Ms. Darah Tracey-Means, leads the school choir at The Willard Hotel’s Evening with the Stars event on Dec. 10. Mr. Oliver Carr, the founder of “Rising Stars” has expressed great interest in St. Anthony and has been instrumental in raising money for scholarships. A gift of $25,000 was awarded to St. Anthony for tuition assistance.
Dear Alumni, Parishioners, and Friends of St. Anthony:

Fifteen years ago, and barely out of college, Principal Bill Eager hired me as our school’s fourth grade teacher. I was 21 years old and had just signed on to be an AmeriCorps volunteer. From our initial interview and my earliest experiences at St. Anthony I knew Mr. Eager was passionate about Catholic education. His mission was to help students to know, love, and serve Jesus. He wasn’t afraid to talk about his faith or to put it into action. (His great sense of humor was just an added bonus.) It was a pleasure to serve on his faculty and administrative team. It gives me great pleasure to highlight my friend and mentor in this issue of the “Blue & Gold.”

Being a blessed school community we always have something to be grateful for or to celebrate. In January, we reveled in a fun-filled Catholic Schools Week. We began with a packed church at the parish’s 9:30 AM Mass and continued with class v. class games, silly socks day, turn around-day, academic games, a talent show, and bake sales. More recently, we celebrated Black History Month which culminated with a school-wide assembly where each class shared a presentation. The assembly included recitation of poetry, singing of spirituals, a skit of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and the ABCs of African American Inventors. The energy and creativity of our teachers and students were quite impressive. Now we are looking forward to other annual favorites like the “Princess Ball,” the Science Fair, and Career Day. There is no doubt our students are having a fun and engaging experience here at St. Anthony.

Be a part of it by following us on Facebook and visiting our website to learn of upcoming events and activities and viewing our online photos.

You, the alumni, parishioners, and friends of St. Anthony, have proven to be generous and supportive of our school. I am thankful for your stewardship and assure you that your gifts are put to good use. Whether it is awarding scholarships or making improvements to our facility your financial gift makes a difference. I urge you to continue doing your best to invest yourself through the resources that God has given you- your energy, your prayers, and your treasure. The gospel of Matthew 6:21 tell us “wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be too.” Our mission of preparing students for lives of service and leadership rooted in an encounter with Jesus Christ is more significant today than ever. Together, we can and will educate a new generation of responsible citizens and faithful Christians. Thank you for this partnership.

The University of Notre Dame has a young alumni prayer that proves especially meaningful during the season of Lent. The prayer reminds us to ask our Heavenly Father to strengthen our convictions, steer our decisions, and foster our faith. May our Lenten journey bring us closer to walking in His light. As always, thank you for your continued support and generosity toward your alma mater, St. Anthony Catholic School.

In Christ,

Michael Thomasian
Principal
Although he subsequently made his living as a classroom teacher and educator, a good part of Bob Wassmann G.S. ’64/H.S. ’68 education at St. Anthony High School came on the basketball court and baseball diamond.

He remembers pitching a perfect game – nine innings with 27 outs and no hits, walks or errors – for St. Anthony High School against Bishop Ireton High School at Turkey Thicket. Wassmann also played on John Thompson Jr.’s first St. Anthony High School basketball team in 1967-1968, after Thompson decided to retire from playing professional basketball.

After he became St. Anthony’s basketball coach, taking over a team with a losing record, Thompson sought out players who could commit themselves to playing basketball year round. St. Anthony did not drop football until soon after Wassmann’s graduation, and when Thompson came to St. Anthony, many basketball players also played football and baseball. The coach asked Wassmann to buy three tennis shoes in June and play in so many pickup games that they would be worn out by September. Wassmann explained that he had commitments to playing on two baseball teams, and Thompson graciously accepted that his player wasn’t ready to fully commit to basketball.

During the Priory Tournament at St. Anselm’s, St. Anthony had a 10-12 record. The players knew that Thompson had never been associated with a losing basketball team, and they did not want to be his first losing team. The basketball team won their first two games, finishing the semi-final game on a Saturday night at 11:30 p.m.

The championship game was to take place on Sunday at 3 p.m. After the semi-final game Saturday night, Thompson told his players that he would see them at the 8:00 a.m. Mass at St. Anthony Catholic Church, with practice and a shoot around afterward. Most coaches might have given their players the time off before a championship game, but not Thompson.

“We would have four-hour practices,” Wassmann recalled. “He was the real deal,” he said of Thompson. Wassmann recalls Thompson holding 6 a.m. basketball practices before Mardi Gras, since the St. Anthony Men’s Club had to set up for a party in the gym.

Wassmann can’t remember who St. Anthony beat in the Priory Tournament championships, but the team ended their season 13-12, a winning record.

At Mount St. Mary’s in Emmitsburg, Md., Wassmann studied English with an Education minor. Upon graduation, he applied to teach in every county in Maryland, and he received a job offer from Montgomery County. He became an English teacher there, including working at Julius West Middle School for 17 years, which included being an interdisciplinary research instructor.

Bob came back to St. Anthony High School as junior varsity and assistant varsity basketball coach for the 1972-1973 season under Bob Grier, the varsity coach.

In 2002, Wassmann became a Reading instructor at Washington Jesuit Academy (WJA), a newly founded school which serves economically disadvantaged boys in Northeast Washington from grades five through eight. He went from a school where there were 1,100 students and 100 teachers to one with 23 students at the beginning and five teachers. He decided to pursue the opportunity in 2001, when his son Andy Wassmann was a freshman at Gonzaga College High School, and the Jesuits had announced the launch of WJA.

Bob and his wife Mary Wassmann H.S. ’72 met after her high school graduation, when she was volunteering as a candy striper at Providence Hospital. Bob “schemed” to meet her, after a friend’s St. Anthony yearbook had fallen on the floor, opening up to Mary’s yearbook page. “You’ve got to be kidding me,” the interested Bob said to his friend, who had a sister in Mary’s class.

The Wassmanns have been married for 38 years, and they have five children, including a daughter who passed away in 1999. Their children are aged 17 to 37 years old and include one University of Maryland graduate, two Mt. St. Mary’s graduates and one future University of Kentucky student, who now attends Elizabeth Seton High School. The Wassmanns have been parishioners at Holy Redeemer Catholic Church in College Park for more than 30 years. They have been active members of the Parish Council, School Board, and Bazaar. They co-chair the parish’s Safe Haven program, through which the parish provides shelter to homeless families for a week, with other area churches
participating to provide coverage for other weeks.

Now, Wassmann is the Ignatian Spirituality Coordinator at WJA, and he serves as fifth grade religion teacher. He plans school Masses, retreats, and prayer services, and he also assists with spiritual formation programs for students and staff.

While he works in a school that is predominantly African-American, Wassmann said, “I knew racial integration from the first grade on,” at St. Anthony. He also witnessed white flight in Brookland after the April 1968 riots. He described Brookland as a “stable middle class community,” that has recently seen significant increases in home prices and commercial development with gentrification.

Wassmann had experienced St. Anthony as a “huge parish.” there were 80 students in two classes in the St. Anthony Grade School Class of 1964. “That was the norm,” he said, but it changed largely due to white flight to the Maryland suburbs. What was particularly unusual about St. Anthony was its co-ed parish high school, which Wassmann recalls as one of only two such schools in the area.

Mr. Gerald Mueller’s “spectacular” school musicals are a fond memory that Wassmann has of St. Anthony High School. Mr. Mueller served from 1980-1987 as musical director at St. Matthew’s Cathedral. In addition, the late Al Lucien’s CYO program, and the passion that Lucien had for football are dear to him. It was during those grade school years that the former “Robbie” Wassmann became known as “Bobby.” He also remembers Sister MaritaFunke’s science classes.

In 2009, as members of the St. Anthony High School Class of 1968 were turning 60, Bob got together with James “Artie” Washington G.S. ’64/H.S. ’68 and Elsie Weistling G.S. ‘64/H.S. ’68, with Barbara Betsock G.S. ‘64/H.S. ’68 providing pro bono legal counsel, and founded the St. Anthony Legacy Foundation, a 501(c)3 non-profit. Each year, the foundation sponsors a student at St. Anthony School. “It was a desire on our part to pass on the fruits and benefits of what we received at St. Anthony to others,” he said. One can find more information at www.toneyslegacy.org.

Wassmann’s father had passed away when Wassmann was seven years old. When his mother went to pay tuition for her three sons attending St. Anthony Grade School following her late husband’s passing, she found that an anonymous donor had paid the tuition. Wassmann is convinced that it was Lucien who had paid for his tuition, as well as that of his two older brothers. Just as the Jesuits have taught Wassmann and his son to be a man for others, so there was a man for others in Brookland who apparently took care of him when his father had passed on.
One can say that Bill Eager’s work at St. Anthony Catholic School and as the father of 11 children has prepared him for just about anything.

While these days, much of the focus of Bill and his wife of 48 years, Carol, is on their 20 grandchildren, new challenges have beckoned since Eager’s retirement from St. Anthony on June 30, 2011, after fourteen years leading the school.

Borrowing a line from the parent of a former student of Bill’s, he calls retirement a “refocusing” of his interests and work.

The New Jersey native took over as chair of the Pro-Life Committee at his parish, St. John Neumann in Reston, Va., which protests, prays and offers sidewalk counseling at abortion clinics, among other pro-life activities. Eager’s engagement in this work seems no small surprise given his family size, and he said he’s always wanted to do pro-life work, but he first had to focus on supporting his wife and children.

About a year ago, a friend took him far outside of his comfortable zone, however, into a life changing opportunity. Just about every month, he walks inside the foreboding walls of a Virginia prison to speak with inmates, whom he and his colleagues call “residents.”

“It changed my life,” Bill says of his involvement in Kairos, an interfaith prison ministry. He compares Kairos to Cursillo, the movement that he and his wife Carol first came to know through a retreat in 1985.

Bill and other church members bake dozens – no, make that hundreds – of cookies for the inmates to give them something to look forward to and a rare joy in their life behind bars. Some Kairos participants give cookies to other inmates as a means to ask forgiveness from them. Bill and other Kairos volunteers, who include those who are former residents, spend from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. for the four-day visit.

“Some of these guys haven’t been hugged in 20 years,” Eager said. “Never underestimate the value of a hug.” Initially, Bill volunteered at the Powtan prison, but following its closure, he will be volunteering at Sussex 1, a maximum security prison.

The message of Kairos is that even though the residents of jails and penitentiaries are behind bars, they can be free. Bill is under no illusions about the past of those he serves, but he points out that God CAN forgive their transgressions. The Commonwealth of Virginia, nonetheless, requires them to serve time for their crimes.

His Kairos involvement has raised his consciousness about the criminal justice system, and it’s led him to call the governors of Georgia, Oklahoma, and Texas, to urge them to commute death penalty sentences.

Recently, the Eager clan purchased a house at Bethany Beach. True to form, weekends there are a family affair. Forty-three people slept in the house over the Memorial Day weekend, while 33 people slept there during the Labor Day weekend.

The Eagers, who sold their house in Reston, live with their daughter Amy and her family in Bambleton, Va. Eager’s sister, Betty, also lives in the house. Eager’s sister, Betty, also lives in the house. Eager’s sister, Betty, also lives in the house. Eager’s sister, Betty, also lives in the house. Eager’s sister, Betty, also lives in the house. Eager’s sister, Betty, also lives in the house.

Brambleton is Eager Central, since five of the Eager children live there, and it’s also the location of Redskins game watches at one of Bill’s son’s houses, which features a “man cave” painted in the burgundy and gold of the team. “What’s the difference between the Redskins and a dollar bill?” he asks. “A dollar bill can still give you four quarters.”

Despite his penchant for cracking Redskins jokes, Bill remains a diehard fan who is always optimistic heading into each season.

In Memoriam
Joseph E. Camardese, Sr., Alumni Parent
Eileen Price Mondi G.S. ’56/H.S. ’60
Joseph Howard Wagner G.S. ’56/H.S. ’60
Fr. Berard Marthaler, OFM Conv.
Please pray for the deceased.
Catholic Schools Week 2015

The picture of Mr. Michael Thomasion, principal, and Natei Ikoli is from Turn Around Day. The others are from the Faculty vs. 8th grade basketball game.

Talent Show: highlighting our students' talents.

Fifth Annual Gala & Silent Auction

Saturday, June 13, 2015 6:00 p.m. • Margot Hall, St. Anthony Parish • Tickets: $30.00

Honoring anniversary classes: St. Anthony Grade School Classes of 1965 and 1990 and St. Anthony High School Class of 1965. Please contact the school at 202-526-4657 or visit www.stanthonysschooldc.org for more information. Proceeds to benefit St. Anthony Catholic School.
ST. ANTHONY’S BLUE & GOLD • VOLUME 15, ISSUE 4 • SPRING 2015

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