



# Odyssey of the Mind®

Dear St. Joseph Catholic School Family,

My name is Br. Zachary Burns, and along with Fr. Tom, Fr. Alberto, Fr. David, and Br. Rufino, I am a Franciscan friar of the Third Order Regular. It is with a great deal of excitement and anticipation that I announce—to students and family alike—the return of the Odyssey of the Mind Club for the 2019-2020 school year!

Odyssey of the Mind is an international creative problem-solving competition which allows students to showcase both their long-term and spontaneous problem-solving skills at the regional, state, and even world levels. Although Odyssey of the Mind can be quite complex (incorporating skills ranging from artistic expression and design to engineering and construction), its premise is simple. At the team's formation and first meeting, it will be given a "long-term problem" which it will then spend the upcoming months solving. This "long-term" problem will require the team to accomplish a diversity of tasks—for example, constructing weight-bearing balsa wood structures, designing remote-control vehicles that will transport objects from place to place, or even writing the "missing" act of a Shakespearean play. On the day of the regional competition—usually in early spring—the teams will present their solution to an assembly of judges and spectators in the form of an eight minute skit, created and acted-out entirely by the team members. Another element of the Odyssey of the Mind competition is spontaneous problem-solving, which tests the ability of a team to "think on its feet" in order to, perhaps, launch ping pong balls across a room using a spoon and a coat hanger, or to name at least twenty creative uses for a strand of household twine—all with minimal preparation time!

St. Francis of Assisi was one of the Catholic Church's greatest visionaries. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, he was able to transform a pile of rubble into a beautiful Church. As a Franciscan, I feel that Odyssey of the Mind offers students the chance to experience that same creative power of God that was so alive in St. Francis. It is my hope that together as a team, students will discover and hone their God-given talents in order to become the dynamic thinkers and leaders our world truly needs. Whether it's getting up in front of a packed auditorium and performing JRR Tolkien's *The Hobbit* as a rap verse, figuring out how to make a robot dribble a basketball, or lending a competing team a roll of duct tape so they can repair a broken prop, Odyssey of the Mind is about allowing students to be transformed by Christ into the best versions of themselves!

Teams will be comprised of 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, and will meet on Fridays after school from October through March (and potentially April and May, depending on whether or not the team advances to State or World Finals). Sign-ups will be conducted in-class through September. There will be an Odyssey of the Mind info-night on Wednesday, 10/02 from 7-8 PM. If you want to find out more about Odyssey of the Mind or have any interest in coaching a team or helping the program in any

capacity, please stop by! This program truly thrives when there is a committed community of parents and coaches supporting the students!

I look forward to continuing to help students build a tradition of creative problem-solving here at SJS!

Blessings,

Br. Zachary Burns, T.O.R.

**Join us for Info-Night!**

**Wed Oct. 2, 7-8 PM**

**(come and go at your convenience)**