



# DIOCESE OF WORCESTER CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

49 ELM STREET  
WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01609

March 20, 2020

Dear Students, Families, and Staff:

Greetings, I hope you are well. With much of the recent national news leaving most of us with a sense of uncertainty, I wish to share some very certain and good news about the appointment of academic department chairs for the 2020-2021 school year at Saint Paul.

The application deadline for chair nominations was March 9<sup>th</sup>. Twenty-one applications for eight available positions were received. The number of applicants was a true encouragement for the future of Saint Paul, and a real testament to the commitment of our present teaching staff at both Holy Name and Saint Peter-Marian. Along with Ms. Pollette and Mr. St. John, I wish to express the Administration's gratitude for such a robust showing of interest. Additionally, I wish to extend my gratitude to our administrative team and faculty members who facilitated schedules and all manner of coronavirus planning impediments in keeping things on track. Thank you!

The interviews and conversations with candidates were rich with insight. Though shy of any self-praise, each candidate brought forth a honed sense of Catholic mission, service, and teaching expertise. To be sure, our young people are in thoughtful and caring hands.

With chair appointments in place, our next phase of staffing will move to department disciplines. Chairs alongside the administrative team will begin reviewing department teaching applications and scheduling interviews over the next two weeks. We will take every measure to safeguard the continuation of online learning, making the best possible of virtual conferencing platforms and the like. In the meantime, please join me in congratulating the following faculty members and their new role at Saint Paul.

All God's blessings,

Michael J. Clark  
Associate Superintendent

### **Saint Paul Theology Chair...*Mr. Joseph Toritto***

Mr. Toritto joined the Holy Name theology department in 2018 and is its current Chair. His thirty-six year career in Catholic education includes teaching positions in religious studies and campus ministry at both the high school and undergraduate level. A long-time member of the Holyoke Catholic High School faculty, Mr. Toritto was an instrumental contributor in the merger between Holyoke Catholic and Springfield Cathedral, now Pope Francis High School, Springfield. He is a 2013 Recipient of the Harold Grinspoon Pioneer Valley Teacher of Excellence Award.

Mr. Toritto earned his undergraduate degree in Accounting at Long Island University, and holds a Master's degree in Theology from the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception, Huntington, NY. Outside the classroom, Mr. Toritto is the Director of *Eventide Singers*, a hospice chorus ministry serving families and healthcare facilities in Amherst, Greenfield, and Turner Falls, MA.

### **Saint Paul Computer Science & Technology Chair...*Mr. Brett Penza***

Mr. Penza is currently the Chair of Computer Science and Director of Technology at Holy Name. His teaching career at HN began in 2004 after a twenty-year tenure in private industry as an IT professional. Mr. Penza possesses a BA in Music Education from the University of Massachusetts (Lowell), and a Master's in Education with a concentration in Curriculum Instruction & Technology from Framingham State University. He is a Microsoft Certified Engineer and holds professional teaching certifications in Instructional Technology and Music Education. His teaching interests include computer programming, robotics, and music instruction.

Mr. Penza's versatility in the classroom is equally matched as a strings and keys musician, offering up his musical talents in a variety of school ministries. In 2013, Mr. Penza was named Teacher of the Year at Holy Name. Writing of his experience as a teacher, Mr. Penza notes, "It is hard to explain the burning desire to be in the classroom, sharing your experiences, hopes and dreams for your students, with no expectations other than to serve and make some small difference in their lives."

### **Saint Paul English Chair...*Ms. Patrice Cronin***

A veteran member of the Saint Peter-Marian faculty, Ms. Cronin first began teaching at SPM in 1984. Over the course of her career, Ms. Cronin has served as Department Chair, NHS moderator, and sophomore class advisor. Her interests in literacy and child development reach well beyond the classroom, with previous professional experience as Director of Library Services at the Haston Free Public Library in North Brookfield, and additionally as an Early Intervention Educator with the Kennedy-Donovan Center in Southbridge.

Ms. Cronin received her BA in English from Assumption College, holds a Master's in Education from Worcester State University, and possesses state certification in classroom teaching. Commenting on the role of the Catholic educator, Ms. Cronin writes, "Much of the joy of teaching English is connecting the literature we read within a Catholic framework. It allows us to extend our faith with our students in a manner that makes our mission and faith tangible for our students."

### **Saint Paul Fine Arts Chair...*Mr. John Deedy***

Joining the Saint Peter-Marian faculty in 2018, Mr. Deedy brings over thirty-six years of experience as a Catholic school educator to Saint Paul. He is an Advanced Placement instructor of English Composition and Language, and also, British Literature. A practiced theatre arts instructor and stage director, Mr. Deedy is a member of the Humanities Department at Quinsigamond Community College where he designed and implemented theatre education for QCC's Theatre Core Program.

Mr. Deedy earned his BA in English from Assumption College, and holds a Master's degree in Theatre Education from Emerson College, Boston. Beyond the classroom, Mr. Deedy's civic interests include previous board memberships with the Worcester Historical Society and the Worcester Trust Fund Commission. He is an active member of the Knights of Columbus and served for several years as a Confirmation catechist at Saint Peter's Parish, Worcester. Reflecting on the role of the arts at Saint Paul, Mr. Deedy writes, "The arts are reflective of life itself, wonderfully expressive in all its mediums. They point to the endless creativity within each of us, and raise our human consciousness to the indwelling of the Divine in all of us."

### **Saint Paul Mathematics Chair...*Ms. Susan Russo***

Ms. Russo's teaching career began in 1990, serving as a mathematics teacher in regional school districts in Tilton, NH, Concord, MA, and Townsend, MA. She earned her undergraduate degree in Mathematics from Bridgewater State University where she was a member of the Pi Mu Epsilon Mathematics Honor Society, and later, earned her Master's degree in Education from the University of Massachusetts (Amherst).

Since 2008, Ms. Russo has been a member of the Holy Name faculty, teaching algebra, geometry, and trigonometry at all levels. Her interests in STEM education and interdisciplinary studies have taken shape through class advising and coordinating various extra-curricular engagements for student enrichment. Reflecting on the future Saint Paul math department, Ms. Russo writes, "As we head into (Saint Paul), we have an opportunity to form a truly great math department. I believe that means creating a forward-looking version of math education that includes a renewed look at pedagogy, (and) an understanding that students coming out of Catholic high school should have the same experiences with mathematical modeling using technology that those at top public schools have..."

### **Saint Paul Social Studies Chair...*Mr. Jonathan Meagher***

A mainstay of the Holy Name faculty since 1995, Mr. Meagher is a graduate of The Johns Hopkins University where he earned a BA in Political Science, and holds a Master's degree in Education from Worcester State University. His teaching interests include US History and American Government, having taught both subjects at the middle school through Advanced Placement level.

Since 1997, Mr. Meagher has been the lead moderator of the Holy Name Mock Trial team, where his contributions have garnered multiple district and state championship recognitions, and

earning the Holy Name Mock Trial team the winningest record among mock trial programs in the state. Commenting on the role of a department chair, Mr. Meagher writes, "...I believe that the job of a department chair is to help teachers become the best version of themselves that they can be by offering suggestions and resources to expand their horizons and the tools at their disposal. As (Saint Paul) takes shape, I think this sort of humility and openness to a variety of teaching methods will be critical."

### **Saint Paul Science Chair...*Ms. Rita Somi***

A native of Lebanon, Ms. Somi earned her undergraduate degree in Biology from the American University of Beirut, and a Master's degree in Biology from Worcester State University where she was named Graduate Marshal. With native fluency in both Arabic and French, Ms. Somi began her teaching career in America as a French and biology instructor at Saint Mary's High School, Worcester. For the past twenty-two years, Ms. Somi has been a member of the SPM faculty where she presently chairs the science department. Her teaching interests include biology, anatomy and physiology, and physical science, having instructed in these disciplines from middle school through the undergraduate level.

Reflecting on the relationship between science and faith, Ms. Somi offers, "As a teacher, I have fostered in my students the love of science, while exposing them to faith, on a daily basis, for twenty years. I rely on my organizational and presentation skills, as well as my extensive body of knowledge and experience, to present scientific knowledge in an engaging manner."

### **Saint Paul World Languages Chair...*Mr. Don Nicole***

Mr. Nicole is a member of the Spanish department at Saint Peter-Marian, bringing over forty-years of experience in language arts teaching to Saint Paul. He has taught French and Spanish in a variety of public, private, and Catholic secondary schools both nationally and internationally. Before joining SPM, Mr. Nicole was on the faculty at Nashoba Regional High School, Bolton, where he earned the school's 2014 Mary Ann Sessions Excellence in Education - Teacher of the Year Award.

Mr. Nicole attended Assumption College earning an undergraduate degree in Foreign Languages (French and Spanish). He continued his studies at the El Instituto Internacional de Madrid (Spain) and Middlebury College, Vermont, where he received a Master's degree in Spanish Language and Literature. Mr. Nicole also holds a Master's Degree in Social Work from Boston College. His teaching interests include both French and Spanish, with extensive experience as an Advanced Placement Spanish Language and Literature instructor. Writing about the student-teacher relationship, Mr. Nicole comments, "It is the enthusiasm of the students with whom I have shared many life-giving years that keeps me committed to education."