

St. Joseph's Academy



*Looking
to the future*



Capital Campaign

Dear friends and benefactors,

The most enjoyable part of a principal's job is visiting the classrooms. Sometimes I make a grand entrance and everyone stands to attention. Most times I prefer to slip in through a back door unnoticed, to watch and enjoy.

The classroom is a hive of intellectual activity. The children often sit on the very edge of their seats. They frown and scratch their heads. They look from book to paper, and when they are stuck they decide to sharpen their pencil. Somehow they think this will do the trick!

One can almost hear their little brains hum with activity, though certain facial expressions sometimes betray mental mishap and mayhem. A sense of compassion overcomes the onlooker as he watches little pairs of hands handle heavy books filled with strange words in tiny print, dictionaries and

encyclopedias, instruments of mental torture, were it not for the illustrations and help from the teacher.

These are valiant children who stick to their letters and sums day in, day out. A day at the office leaves many an adult grim and grumpy, but these little beings skip and dance all the way home, their school bags laden with books, papers and urgent homework for tomorrow.

And whereas we adults return to our desks each morning with a sigh of resignation, they line up laughing and chatting without a care in the world.

These are lovable creatures cherished by God. We too must cherish them and help them into adulthood. We hope to build them a place equipped for learning and the forging of happy memories. Children are worth every sacrifice. God gave up His life for them. It was His greatest joy.

Devotedly in Our Lord and Our Lady,

Father John Brucciani, Principal

Children's Friend

A story

In our last letter I promised to tell the story that explains why we have chosen St. Philomena as the special patron of our Academy Capital Campaign. The story gives me the chance to praise St. Philomena and tell of her wondrous kindness to all those who invoke her, however great and seemingly impossible their needs.

In 2008 I was assigned as principal to a small elementary school in Toulouse, France, which numbered 75 students from 3 to 11 years of age. Although I had worked for several years in secondary schools, I had no experience of young children. My confrere, Fr. Fernandez, therefore advised me to pray a novena to St. Philomena, of whom he was himself a great devotee.

I remember smiling and thinking that his advice was rather simplistic. Shame on me, my pagan habits did not then allow me to pray novenas, and even less to pray them to maiden saints so popular with woman and children. The mass and the rosary were enough for me; what need had I of pious prayers printed on pretty picture cards?

I thanked my confrere in a condescending manner. He told me off for my impiety, telling me that St. Philomena was, after all, the patron saint of youth. Thus came the first miracle. Despite my pride I thought I had nothing to lose by praying a novena. I admit that it was the first of my adult life! I dutifully took up the pretty prayer card and prayed each evening with dubious fervor.



On the eighth day, as I vested for mass, mulling over the many distractions for which every Catholic is guilty when he goes to mass, a lady popped her head through the sacristy door: “Father, are you saying today’s feast day mass?” I replied that it was a ferial day. “Not at all, Father! Today is August 11th, St. Philomena’s feast day!”

My first novena as a priest, and it ends on St. Philomena’s very feast day! My confrere warned me: “Be careful! She is adopting you, you’ll see. Don’t disappoint her. She’s a young girl and sometimes capricious.”

Some weeks later the school year began. As I became acquainted with my new duties, I thought I had better look into the accounts. I knew the budget was tight, more so since the recent construction of three new classrooms and a chapel.

As I juggled the numbers I realized that things were worse than anyone had suspected. We were deep in debt. The school had borrowed heavily and there remained only two months’ worth of loan payments in the accounts. The economic recession was just beginning. State taxation had increased. I was in a panic.

I promptly announced from the pulpit to a parish of 350 souls that we needed \$120,000 in the next six months, and then another \$90,000 yearly for the next three years. I do not think I ever had such an attentive audience as on that Sunday! The parish was stunned.

Meanwhile, my dear confrere, Fr. Fernandez, had given me Fr. O'Sullivan's book: *St. Philomena the Wonderworker*. I read that she had a weakness for schools in financial distress, especially whenever these schools prayed and spread her devotion. I therefore decided to officially invest St. Philomena with the duty of sorting out our financial situation.

Before the entire parish I made the promise that if St. Philomena answered our prayers, I would take all the children and their parents to thank her at her shrine in Mugnano, near Naples in Italy. This was on condition that she paid off all our debts in three years *and* left sufficient money to pay for the transportation and lodging of 100 people, all the way to Mugnano. If she wanted us to come to her, she had to pay our way!

Parish, parents, and children all rose to the occasion. We launched a letter to benefactors. The children (age 3-11) recorded musical stories. I also recorded and gave conferences here and there on educational topics, playing the entertainer in order to interest audiences as to our plight. But most of all, every family of the school and parish set up an image of St. Philomena in their homes and prayed her novena daily.

And we waited. In due course a beautifully hand painted portrait of St. Philomena was given to the school and we hung it up in a place of honor with the inscription below: *St. Philomena, pray for us our savings account.*

Dear reader, the very day we hung up that portrait of the saint, our first purchase orders and donations



came through. The initial deluge of donations gave way to a steady but substantial trickle of funds by way of recurring donations. Our goal was five hundred good souls giving \$10 a month by way of recurring donations. After two years we had reached that goal. Our future was assured for years to come.

Today, six years later, the school continues to thrive. Six teachers teach 110 children from kindergarten to fifth grade. Not only are the new buildings paid off, but the present principal has built four more classrooms to accommodate the ever growing number of students! He is, of course, a great friend of St. Philomena and keeps up her devotion.

As promised, we did arrange what was an unforgettable journey to Mugnano in southern Italy. Parents and children travelled together (expenses paid!) first to Rome then on to Mugnano to say thank you to St. Philomena.

I was not the only one who almost wept when entering the basilica. For three years we had begged her patronage and protection. There had been times of doubt, of frustration and fatigue, even of despair when the sheer magnitude of our undertaking seemed a lost cause. The long hours of toil, the innumerable novenas, the fear of failure. I could hardly believe that we were there at St. Philomena's shrine. The fervour at Holy Mass was tangible.

I will always be indebted to St. Philomena for what she did for the families of Toulouse. She loved them and cared for them more than I ever could. I view this new challenge of building a new St. Joseph's as an opportunity to bring new glory to a saint who answers desperate prayers with overwhelming generosity, and to whom I hope many will be forever indebted. ✍





Pattern & Practice

A school is a little like boot-camp. It aims to fashion lovable but lawless little beings into lovable and disciplined adults.

The family home is the first educational institution a child attends. From his cradle he learns the first rudiments in self-discipline. He may not lead a life of whim. There are standards to be met and rules to be kept. From house chores, through which he learns to serve rather than be served, to please and thank you, the child comes to understand that nothing is due to him, but all is a gift from God.

Soon the family environment requires assistance in its educational task. As the child grows more aware of the world about him, he needs to learn specific skills in order to acquire sound judgment and a love of learning and enterprise. Off to school! There he learns to read and write, count and calculate, but this is not all. The child also learns to regulate his impulses and channel his instincts. He is, after all, an animal of the rational species.

Just as animals are tamed and taught through repetitive exercise, our lovable but lawless child also requires an environment of pattern, practice and routine in order to learn and progress. At school the child learns to regulate his behavior according to set rules. He follows a schedule. He works according to procedures laid down by his teachers. The child's life is very much managed by ritual and routine which eventually become second nature.

Contrary to popular thought, children are never happier than within a framework of routine. Routine provides them with security and foresight. They feel safe when their day runs according to schedule. They like procedure because it reassures them at every moment, and provides them with the means of dealing with unwanted surprises that would otherwise worry and frighten them.

Whereas young adults aspire to adventure and change, children are happy with the ordinary and the routine. They do not need variety and constant change. On the contrary, they tire quickly and cry when taken out of the environment they are used to. This is because a child's imagination is vivid and active enough to provide him with all the entertainment and fantasy he needs. Children with few toys are much more vivacious and daring than children with many.

Pattern, practice and routine constitute the backbone of education. They maintain the momentum of an education received and thus allow it to flower into virtue and success. They are the secret recipe to a life well lived and well spent. They are the main ingredients of happiness.

Why do most adults remember their school days with fondness and sometimes regret? Perhaps because we miss a time when we were carefree, unaware of the struggles of life and full of optimism for the road ahead. But I think we also miss the safety and peace of routine and disciplined living, with no late nights, dinner on time, daily prayers and the sense of accomplishment which makes every recreation more enjoyable.

To provide our children with a place of pattern, practice and routine, namely, a school, is to exercise great love and mercy in their regard. An ordered campus, clean and tidy classrooms, trained teachers, sports and recreational facilities for the cold winter months... all these are just as important to the child's well-being and progress as habits of piety, propriety, politeness and personal hygiene.

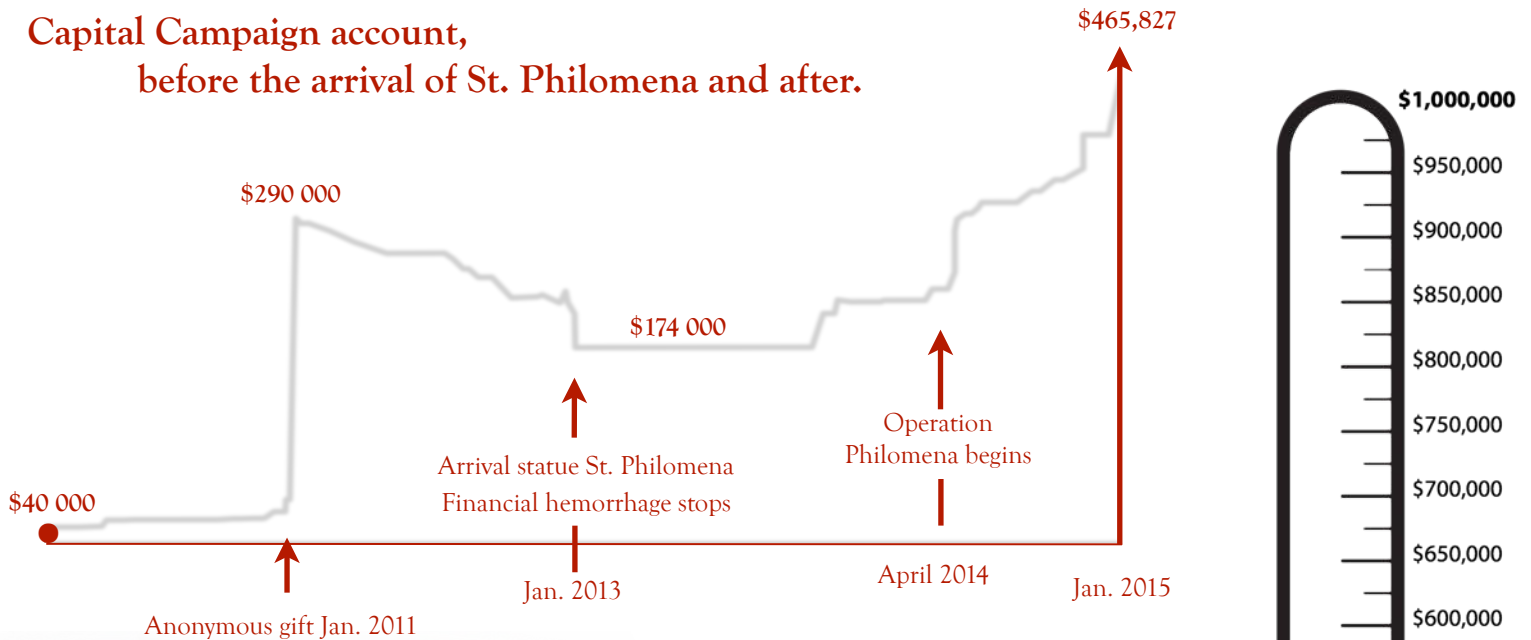
We hope to provide our lovably lawless little beings with an ordered and clean environment in which they will feel safe and happy. Thus they will more readily embrace its rules and routine, and, more importantly, its ideals of industriousness, service and dedication to God and neighbor.

Help us to help our children.

A Saint's Progress



Capital Campaign account,
before the arrival of St. Philomena and after.



\$465,827

541 donors recorded

85 donors monthly donors

Total recurring monthly donations = \$2895

Largest recurring monthly donation = \$350

\$132,705
Operation Philomena

\$333,122
Savings Account



Saint Joseph's Academy • 28049 School Section Road • Richmond, MI 48062

www.academysaintjoseph.com

Holy Mass celebrated each 1st. Friday of the month for all benefactors.



Finding room for our children



Donor Name : _____ Tel : _____

Address : _____

City/State : _____ ZIP : _____ Email : _____

I would like to make a one-time donation of \$ _____

I am enclosing a check. Please bill my credit card (*fill out Option B below*)

I would like to pledge a future gift to be fulfilled by (date): _____

I would like to be a part of Operation Philomena

Amount of Transaction : \$50 \$40 \$30 \$20 \$10

Other Amount : \$ _____

☞ OPTION A : AUTOMATIC BANK DEBIT PROGRAM

I (we) hereby authorize Fifth Third Bank on behalf of St. Joseph Academy, to initiate monthly debit entries from my (our) banking account as indicated below. Please attach a voided check to this form.

Financial Institution Name : _____ Branch : _____

Address : _____

City/State : _____ ZIP : _____

Routing/Transit Number : _____

Account Number : _____

☞ OPTION B: CREDIT CARD PROGRAM



I (we) hereby authorize St. Joseph Academy, to initiate debit from my credit card indicated below.

One time debit Monthly debit Mastercard/Visa/Discover (indicate) _____

Credit Card number : _____ Exp. Date : _____

Account Holder Name : _____ Security code: _____

Date of Transaction : first business day after 15th day of the month. This authority is to remain in full force and effect until St. Joseph's Academy has received written notification from me of its termination in such time and manner as to afford St. Joseph Academy and Financial Institution a reasonable opportunity to act on it

Signature(s) : _____ Date: _____

Operation Philomena subscribers of \$20+ monthly are automatically subscribed to **The Carpenter**, the 8 page monthly parish newsletter with articles, games and common sense for all the family. You will also receive a beautiful Philomena prayer card.

God bless you for your kindness! Questions? Call us at 586-784-9511. You may also donate online at academysaintjoseph.com

Return form to: St. Joseph's Academy • 28049 School Section Rd. • Richmond, MI 48062

Holy Mass offered for all our benefactors on the 1st Friday of each month.