

September/October 2020



**Back In The Classroom!**

We made it!

Welcome back to SMCS! I am so glad to see that our students are back in the classrooms with their teachers and friends. Although we have made some changes to our routines and schedules, we have kept the most important aspects of our school life - building mind, heart, and spirit!



Our SMCS community has done an incredible job adjusting to this new normal we are experiencing. It is such a blessing to hear students laughing, learning, and praying in our halls and classrooms again! Our school family has always worked together to support a successful beginning of the school year. This year is no different! We are all dependent on each other to ensure that our students are healthy and following the new safety and health requirements so we can offer the best education for mind, heart, and spirit!

Thank you for your continued support and for your patience as we navigate through this new adventure!

Blessings,



*Mrs. Halbardier*

St. Mary Catholic School...

**ENTER TO LEARN,  
LEAVE TO SERVE.**

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*And much more!*

# MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Date	Time	Activity
September 22	3:30 PM	Tutoring Begins
September 25		No School - Conference Day <i>See <a href="#">Page 4</a> for more details</i>
October 4	Any Mass	First Sunday Mass
October 7	2:00 PM	Early Dismissal
October 9		Picture Day - Full Dress
October 12		No School - Columbus Day
October 13-16		6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Camp Kappe - <i>Tentative</i>
October 30		Halloween Haunted School House of Fun! <i>See <a href="#">Page 5</a> for details</i>
November 1	Any Mass	First Sunday Mass
November 4	2:00 PM	Early Dismissal
November 9-13		Online Scholastic Book Fair
November 23-27		Thanksgiving Holiday

The Official SMCS 2020-21 School Year Calendar has been updated! Check it out on the [School Website](#), print a new copy, and update your calendars!

## Uniform Reminders

- ◆ SMCS Uniform Sweaters/Jackets are encouraged - many students find the classrooms to be chilly.
- ◆ Fridays are Full Dress Days
- ◆ Extra large headbands with ears, unicorn horns, top hats or other accessories that are not part of the uniform are not allowed.
- ◆ Belts are no longer required for Grades 3 and below.



October 4  
November 1

Students who attend any Mass in person wearing full dress uniform will earn **free dress the following Monday**.

Due to COVID-19 limitations, you do not need to sign up in the Narthex at this time.

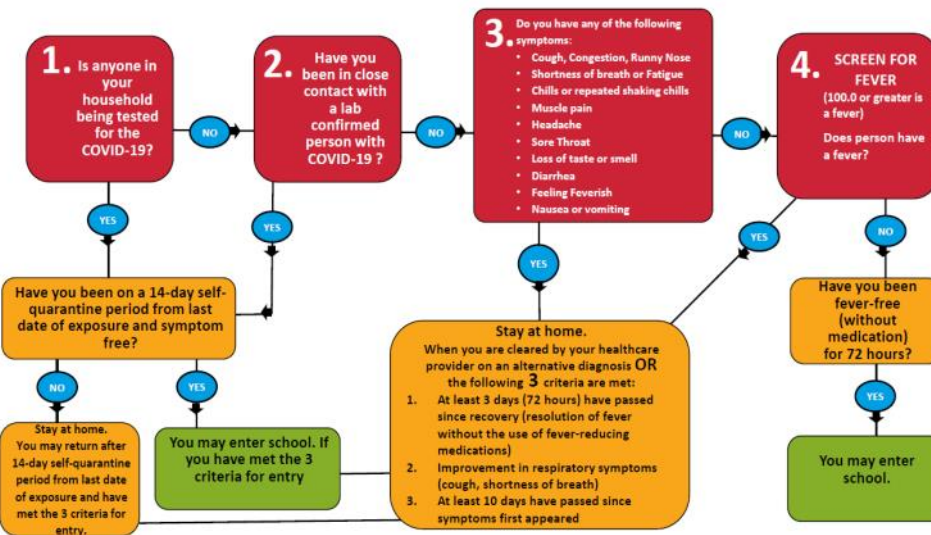
# COVID-19 LEADS TO BIG CHANGES AT ST. MARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Beginning in March 2020, COVID-19 disrupted the lives and normal routines of everyone in our community and world at large. Distance learning last year was successful through the cooperative work between SMCS Faculty and Staff and all of our parents, students, and extended family members. For the 2020-21 school year, SMCS Administration, Faculty, and Staff are working continuously to modify existing practices and develop new routines to safeguard the health and safety of everyone in the SMCS family. Every SMCS family has a part in making the year successful!

## Use the Self-Screening Chart Before You Head Out

May I enter the school? Start with the 4 red questions below...

Updated July 2020



## Visitors and Volunteers

No visitors or volunteers are allowed in the school at this time.

## Car Lines

Mornings: Students should be masked and ready to have temperatures checked prior to drop off.

Afternoons: All students are being released in



one car line at the front of the school. Follow directions from Mrs. Neschich and form multiple lines to keep cars from blocking traffic in the street.

**Afternoon Car Line is complete by 3:35. Any students remaining will go to After Care.**

## Mid-Day Appointments/Early Pick Up

Parents must enter the school, **wearing a mask**, to sign students out for appointments or early pick ups. Early pick up should be no later than 2:45 PM

Upon return to school, a staff member from the office will bring students back into the building. Parent sign-in is not required.

## Birthday Celebrations



Due to virus/contamination concerns, all birthday treats must be store-bought and packaged. No homemade items are allowed at this time. **Please bring treats in at least 48 hours ahead of the celebration.**

As always, coordinate with your child's teacher regarding appropriate snacks/allergy concerns.

## Friday Mass

The students are not currently attending Friday Mass in person. On Friday mornings, students engage in age-appropriate activities in their classrooms in lieu of Mass in the church. **Full Dress is still required on Fridays!**

Please check out the [St. Mary Parish YouTube channel!](#) The Parish Staff has done a fantastic job recording Mass.

**Please visit the SMCS website on COVID-19 for the most up-to-date information:**  
<http://stmarylc.org/covid-19-information/>

# Virtual Teacher Conferences

Friday, September 25<sup>th</sup>

This month, parent/teacher conferences will be held via Teams. For general information on Teams see [Page 6](#). To access the conferences, you will need to use your child(ren)'s Office 365 login information. This was sent to you earlier this month by Mrs. Pate in an e-mail with the subject "Confidential". **The meeting invitation will be sent to each student's @stmarylc.org e-mail address, not to the parents' e-mail addresses!**

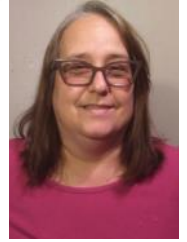
To find it, follow the steps below. For more detailed directions refer to this [document](#) or the how-to [video](#).

1. Go to <http://stmarylc.org/library> . In the top grid, click on the block that is in the second row, second column (called "Office").
2. Sign in to Office 365 **using your child's login ID**, then select "Outlook" from the row of icons.
3. Conference e-mail invitations will be in your child(ren)'s Inbox and will include information on the conference time and a link to "Join Microsoft Teams Meeting". At the stated time, click that link.
4. You will be prompted to choose whether to use the browser or to download the desktop app for the meetings. The [how-to document](#) provides more details on these and other in-meeting options.

**Separate parents will be able to access Teams simultaneously from different locations, both using your child's login ID.**

# Teacher Spotlight

## Mrs. Susan Little



**Teaches:** 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade Science and Social Studies, 5<sup>th</sup> grade Homeroom

**Education:** Bachelors of Science in Educational Studies

Mrs. Little has been in the education field for 16 years, 14 of which she spent in Catholic schools. "What I like about Catholic Schools is that we get to work with parents together to educate their child both academically and spiritually. My Catholic faith and family involvement is important to me." She also served as a Library Manager for several years and taught Junior High electives. Mrs. Little and her husband will celebrate their 20th anniversary in November. They have three grown children, two grandchildren, two cats, a dog, a bunny, and a pot belly pig. Mrs. Little's hobbies include reading, cross stitching, gardening, traveling, and watching sports. Mrs. Little is very excited for her first year at St. Mary, and she says everyone has made her feel welcomed.

## Mrs. Christina Ovalle



**Teaches:** 1<sup>st</sup> grade

**Education:** Certified in EC-6<sup>th</sup> grade and Bilingual education

Mrs. Ovalle has been married for 15 years to her Navy Veteran husband and together they have three children. One is in high school and the others are in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and kindergarten at St Mary. Previously a substitute teacher for SMCS, Mrs. Ovalle is excited about her first year as a full time teacher here. Her hobbies include decorating her home and classroom and traveling with her family. "What I love about St. Mary school is their high standards, safe school environment, small classes and I love how the students explore their faith and learn how to serve their community." Mrs. Ovalle looks forward to a year of learning and adventures!

# HALLOWEEN

## ST. MARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL HALLOWEEN HAUNTED SCHOOL HOUSE OF FUN!

This year we will be celebrating Halloween a little bit differently due to COVID-19 Guidelines. Here is a sneak peek of the fun activities the Staff has planned for our students!

- Classroom door decorating
- Indoor Trick-or-Treating
- Halloween Stations for classes in the front parking lot during recess/outside time
- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade is decorating the back hall for a spooky fun time!



Students may wear their costumes all day.  
No Halloween masks allowed.



- **Happy retirement wishes** to Mr. and Mrs. Bartosh!
- **Congratulations on your new baby** girl born in August, Mr. and Mrs. White! Also thanks to Mrs. Pate and Mrs. Nancy Matthews for filling in until Mrs. White returns to her 1<sup>st</sup> grade classroom.
- **Welcome to St. Mary** Mrs. Little (5<sup>th</sup> grade) and Mrs. Ovalle (1<sup>st</sup> grade)!
- **Welcome back to the classroom** Mrs. Gonzalez as the Spanish teacher for grades PK3-3<sup>rd</sup> in addition to staffing before-school care.

## Open Letter from PSA

The PSA has traditionally provided support to the school and teachers through class activities, class parties and school-wide fundraising, to name a few. Times are different but we are still here, open to change and thinking of creative ways to adapt. The way I look at it is we take it slow and keep it simple while concentrating on keeping us all connected.

Here are some key points:

- Consider signing up for the **free, online PTO Expo, Southwest Region**, taking place Oct. 6. This will be a great way to get some ideas and start the brainstorming on where we go from here.
- If you have a connection to another school **please take note**. Many of our traditions have been spinoffs of what other schools have done in the past.
- For now **PSA meetings and other events** will be virtual. Under consideration are events such as a book club, happy hour where we share beverage recipes, cooking lessons, prayer group, and a parent service project.
- **Fundraising** will be key this year since most of our past fundraising options are not available at this time. The Church Bazaar will host an Online Silent Auction this year. I hope we can learn a lot from their online experience coming up very soon.

Stay tuned for more news on the topics that many of you have asked about: room parents, the Gala, family activities, parents' night out and class parties. All comments/suggestions are more than welcome!

I look forward to hearing from you. It continues to be an honor to be involved with SMCS! Please [contact me via email](#) or [Laura Battle](#) at any time.

*Patricia Richards*



**WHAT'S NEW?**

- Grades 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> have implemented a new science curriculum this year
- Typing skills are being taught to all grades
- Students have a study hall period in their schedules where they can work on homework or read.

**Happy Birthday**

September 4                      Mrs. Little  
September 29                     Mrs. Gonzalez



## FAQ About Microsoft Teams



**Q: What is Teams?**

**A:** Teams is an online meeting platform that is included in the Microsoft Office 365 school subscription and integrates with other Office 365 applications. With Teams, students and teachers will also be able to instantly share files, check for understanding with instant-feedback surveys/quizzes and share an online notebook where they can save their ideas. Perhaps the most attractive feature of Teams is that it provides a type of “intra-net” meeting place. Only those with access within the St. Mary Catholic School Office 365 system will be allowed to enter meetings, making students and meetings safe and secure.



**Q: How and why would I use Teams?**

**A:** Parent/teacher conferences will be held via Teams on Friday, September 25. Refer to the [how-to document](#) and [video](#) for detailed information about using teams for these conferences.

**Q: How much will students use Teams?**

**A:** While in a face-to-face learning mode, Junior High students will use this and other Office 365 applications. Other grades will be able use applications such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote, but not Teams or Outlook (the email

component of Office 365). If SMCS moves to a hybrid or distance-learning mode, students can expect to use Teams every day. Each class a student would normally attend in a face-to-face setting will be held instead via Teams. Same time. Same teacher. Same class. It’s just a different mode.

**Q: How will this work with the Learning Management System (LMS) offered in RenWeb/FACTS?**

**A:** Teams and the LMS complement each other in the hybrid and distance-learning environments. Teams offers live, face-to-face teaching and parent meetings. Families and staff will all use Teams. The LMS is used only by teachers and students, providing a place for them to conduct class business that may not be “real-time.” It also allows teachers to post assignments that connect directly with classroom gradebooks, store important class documents, and receive uploads of student homework. Recording live sessions in Teams facilitates teacher connections with students who are absent during the live class. The recording is made and uploaded to the SMCS Office 365 One Drive, after which the teacher posts a link to those sessions with associated make-up work documents, in the LMS.



# FUNDRAISING



Support SMCS with these easy fundraising opportunities!

- **Amazon Smile**—Do you order from Amazon? Select St. Mary Catholic School as your charitable organization and a portion of your orders will go to SMCS. Be sure to navigate to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) in order for your purchases to qualify.
- **Kroger Community Rewards**—Link your Plus card and 3-5% of your purchase will go to SMCS. Go to [Kroger Community Rewards](https://www.kroger.com/rewards) to sign in/create a new account, and select organization number UV373. Be sure to click “Enroll”!



- **SMCS Cafeteria Fundraisers** - Proceeds from the cafeteria fundraisers benefit SMCS by funding various school activities and functions.
  - **Friday Lunches** - Special Friday lunches are offered from a variety of vendors (Chick-fil-a, Marco’s Pizza, etc.). Friday lunches can be purchased online by the monthly lunch order deadline, or by paper copy the week of.
  - **Ice Cream Sales** - Ice cream is available for purchase every day during lunch for 50-75¢ each. You can also buy ice cream for your child’s entire class as a birthday treat!
- **Clipping for Cash**—Box Tops® for Education has switched to the Box Tops® for Education App. Find it on the App Store or Google Play. Set SMCS as your school and scan your receipt! Visit [BTFE.com](https://www.btfec.com) for more details!



**Follow St. Mary Catholic School on Facebook!**

Click [here](#) to join the St. Mary School Facebook page and keep up-to-date with school news!



## Resources

**Family Portal** (FACTS, grades, lunch orders)  
[stmy-tx.client.renweb.com/pwr](https://stmy-tx.client.renweb.com/pwr)

**Teacher’s Friday Letters**  
<http://stmarylc.org/createneews/important-links-for-fast-access/>

**Safe Haven Training**  
[galvestonhouston.cmgconnect.org](https://galvestonhouston.cmgconnect.org)

**St. Mary Facebook Page**  
[www.facebook.com/stmarylc](https://www.facebook.com/stmarylc)

**COVID-19 Information**  
<http://stmarylc.org/covid-19-information/>

**Bobcat Buzz Archives**  
[stmarylc.org/the-bobcat-buzz](https://stmarylc.org/the-bobcat-buzz)

## THANK YOU

- .... **Steinberg Family** for making the table dividers for the Kinder/Pre-K classrooms
- .... **Mr. Socha** for the teacher snack packs
- .... **Ms. Springrose** for the AWesome Root Beer delivery
- .... **Mrs. Monthly** for making masks for students and teachers
- .... **Everyone** for the Amazon Smile Donations! Thank you for raising money for SMCS!