



Saint Augustine of Canterbury Roman Catholic Church

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March 25, 2022

Feast of the Annunciation

Dear School and Parish Community:

On this Solemnity of the Feast of the Annunciation we are mindful of the “YES” of Mary to the Angel Gabriel with the beautiful words, “I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me as you say.” With these words the WORD became flesh! We call Mary’s YES in Latin “FIAT.”

The “fiat” is very important in my life and the lives of many priests and religious. Priests and religious take a “promise,” “vow,” or “an oblation” of obedience to our Bishop or Provincial which often becomes our “FIAT” to do not our will but God’s will as expressed through the Church.

Over twenty years ago, when the Brothers of the Sacred Heart made the decision to leave our parish and school, I made a fervent Novena to the Holy Spirit to have another Religious Community come to our school. I can remember it was around the feast of Pentecost, thus the Novena to the Holy Spirit. I wrote to the Provincial of the Religious Teachers Filippini inviting them to come to our parish. The Provincial at the time, Sister Frances Lauretti, MPF, invited me to come to Villa Walsh and speak to her and the Provincial Council concerning my request. I made an act of faith and prayed to Saint Lucy Filippini that her daughters could come to Saint Augustine.

A few days went by and I received a phone call from the Provincial to arrange a private meeting with her and a potential Principal to come to our parish. The luncheon “summit” was held at the rectory and the Provincial wanted to make sure the “pastor” and possible “principal” would get along! Following the “summit,” the Provincial appointed Sister Mary Louise Shulas, MPF, as the new principal of Saint Augustine of Canterbury School. However, there was another hurdle to have additional Sisters come to St. A’s. The Mother General in Rome, Mother DeBacco, had to give permission to open a new convent. Mother General did give her permission and the rest is history. What a blessing the Sisters ARE, to us!

Sister Mary Louise, along with the other Sisters “missioned to Saint Augustine,” moved into our beautiful Convent. Prior to their arrival I renovated the convent to make them feel like they were at Villa Walsh, their Provincial House, with all the images of Saint Lucy Filippini and other paintings that were found at the Villa.

Sister Mary Louise with her enthusiasm for Catholic education and with the cooperation of the teachers and staff, turned our School around! Today Saint Augustine of Canterbury School, a “Blue Ribbon School,” is a beacon in the Diocese of Metuchen for excellence in Catholic education!

CANON OF SAINT FLORIAN BASILICA



Over the past twenty years, Sister Mary Louise and I worked in a collaborative spirit in the administration of the School, which was often noted by the Diocesan Schools Office. Everyone can agree that the past two years have been very challenging for everyone due to the pandemic, especially on the administration, teachers, and staff of our school. I am very proud to share that our school was ready on day one to go virtual due to the lock down. I credit this to the vision of Sister Mary Louise in preparing for this moment to happen and I am grateful to the teachers who embraced this new challenge in teaching our students. Last year the students, teachers, and staff came back in person and the entire school year was a great success. Yes there were many challenges we faced over the past two years, but through great teamwork and cooperation we triumphed! Now everyone in our school has the option of wearing a mask and we are once again able to have School Masses with everyone present...what a joy that has been for me as the pastor. I would like to give a shout out to our school nurse, Donna Herмосilla, who has been with us for many years in guiding us through the pandemic with all the medical updates!

Recently Sister Mary Louise and I have been in dialogue about the future of our school. After prayer and discernment, Sister Mary Louise and I have peacefully agreed that "it's time" to quote Sister for her to step down as Principal. Sister Mary Lou has served over the past twenty years with great energy, commitment and LOVE for our students and has given entirely of herself for the good of our school. At this time Sister is in dialogue with her Provincial to see where God will be leading her, so I entrust this special intention to your prayers. Sister will be stepping down as Principal effective June 30, 2022. The parish will be hosting a farewell reception for Sister Mary Louise on Sunday, June 26th from 2pm – 4pm for students, parents, faculty, staff and parishioners to stop by to thank Sister for all that she has done for Saint Augustine of Canterbury School. On Monday, June 6, the last school Mass, which will be celebrated at 10:15am, the Mass will be offered in gratitude for all that Sister Mary Louise has done for our school since her arrival over twenty years ago. Following the Mass there will be a private school party for the students to thank Sister Mary Louise.

After much prayer, I am pleased to announce that Mr. Edward Modzelewski, presently serving as our Vice-Principal, will be the new Principal, effective July 1, 2022. Bishop Checchio and the Secretary of Education for the Diocese of Metuchen, Ellen Ayoub has both given their blessing to "Mr. M's" appointment as the Principal of Saint Augustine of Canterbury School. Mr. Modzelewski has been a parishioner of St. A's since his birth in 1983. His family's roots go back to the creation of the parish in 1958. When I arrived here in 1995, Mr. Modzelewski was in the 7th grade! Mr. Modzelewski graduated from Saint Augustine School in 1997. Mr. M graduated from St. Joseph High School in Metuchen and went on to earn a Bachelor's Degree in History from Drew University. After working for the United States Department for Homeland Security for several years, Mr. Modzelewski, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, decided to pursue his passion for education and earned a Master's Degree in Education from Drew University. After teaching in both public High School and Middle School, Mr. Modzelewski started working at St. Augustine School in 2009, teaching both World and United States History. In 2016, Mr. Modzelewski was appointed Vice-Principal of St. Augustine School. At the same time at my direction he enrolled at Seton Hall University where he earned an Education Specialist Degree in Education, Leadership, Management and Policy, completing the requirements for New Jersey Principal Certification. While at Seton Hall, Mr. Modzelewski was inducted into the Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society in Education for overall excellence

in program studies. Mr. Modzelewski expertise in teaching concentrated in the area of Middle East history. His personal interests include Constitutional History, the United States Supreme Court and the law as it applies to educational organizations.

Mr. Modzelewski resides in Somerset County with his wife, Marissa whom he met in Kindergarten at Saint Augustine. Marissa is a graduate of Saint Augustine School as well, and Father Edmund Luciano graduated with Eddie and Marissa. All three daughters attend Saint Augustine School and are all St. Augustine Knights. As Mr. Modzelewski begins this new journey he is forever grateful for his family's constant, love and support. I entrust Mr. Modzelewski to your prayers as he assumes the role of Principal and continues making Saint Augustine of Canterbury School a beacon of excellence in Catholic education in the Diocese of Metuchen!

On the Feast of the Annunciation we rejoice in Mary's YES...her FIAT, and we thank God for Sister Mary Louise's many "yeses" throughout her vocation, but especially her "yes" that brought her to Saint Augustine. We pray that God will make known to Mr. Edward Modzelewski the many graces he will receive as he said "yes" to God through my invitation, the blessings of Bishop Checchio and the Secretary for Education, Ellen Ayoub, to become the 12th Principal of Saint Augustine of Canterbury School. I remain,

In the Peace of Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Father Bob", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Reverend Canon Robert G. Lynam, KCHS
Pastor

Saint Augustine of Canterbury, pray for us!
Saint Lucy Filippini, pray for us!