90th Anniversary Reunion

In 1922, a group of women with a $50 bond confronted the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Chicago with the urgent need for a church on the west side. One year later, an organized community broke ground on a brand new church, and a parish was founded. Ninety years later, Saint Frances of Rome still stands. For almost a century, SFR has been a cornerstone in the community. Thousands of students have graduated from Saint Frances of Rome School and gone on to make great contributions to our society. We remain driven by our faith, fortitude, and integrity as we continue to instill values, honesty, and discipline in the lives of children. We look back with pride on the progress of past generations, and look forward to a future of continued successes.

In celebration of this great milestone and all who have passed through Saint Frances of Rome’s doors, we are hosting a reunion on Saturday, September 21, 2013 for all of our graduates. The evening will begin with a special Mass celebrated by Bishop John Manz at 5:00 p.m. followed by a reception with hors d’oeuvres and drinks at the school. We have invited former pastors and teachers to share in this occasion. Former principal, Sr. Corine Walsh, and long time educators Sr. Ritamary Corso, Mrs. Rose Grill, and Mrs. Maureen Martin have already confirmed their participation on this special evening. We hope to bring many of our alumni together to reunite with old friends and share stories of their time at St. Frances. The evening will serve as an excellent opportunity to celebrate shared experiences and love for our school.

Registration for the event has already begun and is only $20 per guest. For more information or to R.S.V.P. online, please visit our event webpage at www.sfr-school.org/90th or contact us at (708) 652-2277 ext.327.
A Message from Fr. Mark Bartosic, Pastor

At St. Frances of Rome School, we strive to grow in our Catholic identity. There are people serving on the Board of Directors committed to making sure that happens. We evaluate our efforts according to five essential marks of Catholic Schools, as identified by Archbishop Michael J. Miller, CSB in his review of Vatican documents, The Holy See’s Teaching on Catholic Schools. The first two of the five benchmarks challenge us to be always inspired by a supernatural vision and grounded in a Christian anthropology.

What does that mean? The first mark means that the Paschal mystery (the death and resurrection of Jesus) is the key to understanding reality. The entire creation, according to St. Paul, is destined to share in the rising of Jesus from the dead. That casts everything in a supernatural light. St. Jean Vianney said, “All that we do without offering it to God is wasted.” All we do, if offered sincerely in love to God and for the good of our neighbor, will contribute to God’s plan to save the world from sin and death. We become co-creators of the Kingdom of God the Father, through the Paschal Mystery of his Son, Jesus. We want our kids to think that way.

We want to operate out of a Christian anthropology, too. What’s that? It’s the belief that in His great economy of salvation, grace builds on nature. Whatever, however, whoever we are, we are called to be players in God’s plan. We are perfectible. We are called to be saints, and the people we are today are the raw material of that saint we are called to be. If I am the smartest kid in the class, my intelligence is part of God’s plan to save the world. If I am the least intellectually gifted child in class, I don’t have to become like the other guy before I can become a saint. I just have to do my best. God doesn’t ask us to come up with the perfect body, the perfect mind, the perfect family, the perfect backstory, the perfect personality, etc., before we can follow His son and the saints to holiness. What we are already by nature – made in God’s likeness and image – is all we need to get started. This is our anthropology – which insists that grace presupposes, and builds upon, nature, ultimately perfecting it.

The other benchmarks are: animated by communion and community, imbued with a Catholic worldview throughout our curriculum, and sustained by Gospel witness. Stay tuned to future newsletters for more on our efforts to keep the Cicero Catholic Schools, Catholic!

CCS 5K Results

Saint Frances of Rome, Our Lady of Charity and the Cicero community came together earlier this year for the Third Annual Cicero Catholic Schools 5K. This year’s race was a huge success, with over 500 people registering and raising over $8,000 in support of Catholic education at our schools. Congratulations to the 375 participants who crossed our finish line. Thank you to all of our race registrants, and volunteers who helped make the event a success. We are especially grateful to Corey Steel Company for once again sponsoring our event. We hope to see you at next year’s race on Saturday, April 26, 2013.

All participants who crossed the CCS 5K line received a medal.
From the Executive Director, Clement V. Martin

Over the past ten years, I have had the privilege of working at Saint Frances of Rome. I have enjoyed this time tremendously. The relationships I have developed with members of the faculty and staff, students and their families, and many parishioners have brought significant joy to my life. I have enjoyed watching students grow and mature physically, academically and spiritually. I am very grateful to Fr. Mark for having given me this great opportunity.

It is with mixed emotions that I inform you that I will be leaving Saint Frances of Rome at the conclusion of this school year. Beginning July 1st, I will succeed Fr. Chris Devron as the President of Christ the King Jesuit High School in Chicago.

Over the past six months our Board of Directors has worked hard to create a strategic vision and plan for our school. This vision – to be nationally recognized as the premier Catholic elementary school community, leading innovation in sustainable, academically excellent, faith-based education – lays out a bold vision for Saint Frances.

With the continued leadership of Fr. Mark as pastor, Ms. Huizar as the school principal, and our Board, I am confident that this vision will be realized. Saint Frances of Rome is also blessed with a strong faculty and staff committed to providing a quality Catholic education to all the children in our community. I leave knowing that Saint Frances of Rome is in very capable hands.

SFR Welcomes Mr. Hartley

Saint Frances of Rome and the Cicero Catholic Schools would like to welcome Mr. Steven Hartley as its new Director of Advancement. He comes to us as the former Executive Director of The Peace Corner Youth Center in Chicago, where he was responsible for the operations and development of a nonprofit that provided academic enrichment, social support, life skills, and safety to at-risk middle and high school youth living in the Austin neighborhood of Chicago. This organization also provided employment services to the hard-to-employ young adults.

Steve also has experience working as an Art Director for a media company and is also a former teacher. He taught middle school at St. Agnes of Bohemia in the Little Village neighborhood of Chicago. He then moved on to CPS before working as a curriculum facilitator for the Winnetka Public School System.

He is excited about working with the Cicero Catholic Schools because he believes a Catholic education can transform the life of a child and their family. “It is important that all children learn how to be the best people they can be. They should not be limited by a disadvantaged economic situation or lack of resources.”

Steve was born in Hammond, IN and has lived in Chicago since 1997. He has a B.A. in Professional Writing from Purdue University and an M.Ed. in Curriculum, Instruction, and Evaluation from UIC. He is currently completing his Masters in Nonprofit Administration at North Park University.

“Educating saints and scholars, disciples of Christ, and leaders in the community.”
Graduation at SFR

Graduation at Saint Frances of Rome is more than just the conferral of a diploma. It is the affirmation of the success of our mission. It is an occasion in which we celebrate the fact that our students have developed into saints, scholars, disciples and leaders. The students in this year’s graduating class at Saint Frances of Rome have proven that they are ready to continue on, prepared for the rigors of high school and life beyond our walls. We are confident that they are leaving our school having had the opportunity to develop and explore their relationship with God.

We are very proud of the students in our eighth grade class. Their graduation marks the beginning of a bright future. Members of the Class of 2013 will be attending prestigious high schools, including Christ the King, Cristo Rey, De La Salle, Fenwick, Guerin Prep, Our Lady of Tepeyac, St. Joseph, St. Patrick, and Trinity. The graduation ceremony was also an opportunity to recognize the excellence of particular students. Each year, Saint Frances of Rome presents the Saint Thomas Aquinas Award, representing outstanding achievement and a commitment to Catholic service. This year’s award winner was Abigail Favela. She was chosen because she embodies what it means to be a leader and a disciple of Christ. She is respected by her teachers and peers alike and has adhered to the ideals in our mission statement.

All of our students are looking forward to the opportunities that will become available to them in high school, and many of them already have their eyes set on college. We wish them all continued success in the future. Please keep the members of the graduating class and all the students at Saint Frances of Rome in your prayers.

Class of 2009 Update

Four years ago, the Class of 2009 graduated from St. Frances of Rome. This spring, that same class graduated from high school. These recent alumni are now moving on to do great things with their lives. Many of them will continue on to college to pursue degrees in a variety of fields.

Ashley Ocampo will attend Loyola University in the fall, where she will pursue a degree in communications. As part of Cristo Rey Jesuit High School’s work program, Ashley worked at Clifford Law Offices. She was asked to remain working, and will continue to do so after graduation. She is grateful to Saint Frances of Rome for shaping her into the person she is today. “SFR may be small, but it is a strong and supportive community.”

Andrea Zuleta’s time at Saint Frances was brief, but it was there that she created a network of friends that supported her throughout high school. While a student at Fenwick High School, she participated on the school’s track team, was a National Honor Society member, traveled to Spain for World Youth Day, and volunteered at a food pantry. This fall, she will attend Northwestern University and double major in French and International Studies.
As a little girl, Mrs. Rose Grill used to walk to school at Saint Frances of Rome with the other children who lived on her block. She remembers loving her time as a student at SFR. All of her teachers inspired her to do great things, including her first grade teacher, Sister Margaret, who inspired her to become a teacher. After graduating from Saint Frances in 1971, she attended Immaculate Heart of Mary in Westchester, before going on to Illinois State University where she received her teaching degree. The wonderful community and school families made her come back to teach at her alma mater. She has now been teaching at Saint Frances of Rome for 33 years.

Mrs. Grill describes Saint Frances as a community where parents are involved in the children’s education and teachers are very committed to their job. When she first began to teach, there were teachers who had already been at SFR for ten to fifteen years and never wanted to leave. Today’s younger teachers give her inspiration, and she always learns something new while sharing her own experience with them. The relationships she has made with teachers and supportive principals are one of the many reasons she has remained with us for so long.

Mrs. Grill loves teaching the first grade. Her class always looks forward to their annual zoo field trip where they get to see the animals they studied in the classroom. Recently her class finished a community inquiry-based unit where they video-conferenced with the first grade class at Holy Family. She believes the students of SFR are respectful and full of life.

When asked what role faith plays in her teaching, she responded: “Being able to share my faith with the students is what drives me every day and is the most important reason why I chose to stay in education in a Catholic school for 33 years.” Her Catholic faith enables her to witness examples of faith and grace in her students each day, and to reinforce our shared Catholic beliefs throughout the day. She believes growing in one’s faith takes discussion, reading the Bible, doing service for others, and prayer together. She enjoys facilitating all of these different approaches with the students in their learning and deepening their faith and understanding of God.

In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Mrs. Grill also serves on the school’s 90th anniversary committee. She is excited about bringing alumni and former educators together to celebrate how wonderful the school is at the special reunion on September 21. She hopes to be able to reconnect with her former students.

Earlier this year, Mrs. Grill was awarded the Symetra Heroes in the Classroom Award by Gallagher Benefit Services in association with the Chicago Bears for her outstanding leadership and instructional skills. Throughout her career, she has served as a role model for other teachers. Fellow faculty members frequently speak of their admiration for Mrs. Grill, who can often be found in her classroom perfecting lessons and preparing the learning environment late into the evening. She is known for going above and beyond expectations, and she has demonstrated exceptional dedication, leadership, and service throughout the years. We are grateful for her many years of service.

“Educating saints and scholars, disciples of Christ, and leaders in the community.”
Alumni Updates

Robert Dahms, ’45
Thank you to Mr. Robert Dahms for submitting last issue’s photo booth picture at a reunion event in 2006. The photo was of his graduating class in 1945. Mr. Dahms and his three brothers attended and graduated from Saint Frances of Rome. Richard, 1939; Donald, 1942; Robert, 1945; Lenard, 1952.

Bonita Jaros Mesewicz, ’60
I graduated from SFR in 1960 and grew up in Cicero until I married and moved to the west suburbs. I remained friends with several people from grade school days and had many wonderful memories of parish life growing up in the fifties and sixties. I am grateful for the education I had and the dedicated sisters who taught me the values of being a Catholic Christian.

I am a college grad, who has worked in the medical and business fields, raised three children, and have five grandchildren. My husband, Marty, and I have been married for 46 years and live in Mokena near our grandchildren. We are retired, but not from keeping very active as Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists of Will County.

Sister Nadine Luebbert, CCVI
St. Frances of Rome School was my very first teaching assignment (1950-1953). My name at that time was Sister David. Later I went back to my baptismal name. I loved the children I taught there and their wonderful, cooperative parents. In 1971 I again returned to Cicero as Principal of the school. I have fond memories of those years! May your celebration of this 90th anniversary be a time of joy and gratitude for all of God’s blessings through the years!

Alumni Celebration
In honor of SFR’s 90th anniversary, there will be a special alumni reunion on Saturday, September 21, 2013. There will be a special Mass at 5pm followed by a reception in the school. Please contact us at 708-652-2277 x326 for more information or visit our event page at www.sfr-school.org/90th.

Summer in Cicero

Saint Frances of Rome and Our Lady of Charity are once again coming together to offer the Cicero Catholic Schools Summer Program. Now in its fourth year, this full day program is open to current students at St. Frances of Rome, as well as students in our community. This year’s summer program will run Monday through Thursday from June 17 to July 18.

Mornings in the program focus on the development of literacy and math skills, while afternoons include activities such as science experiments, sports, computers, arts & crafts, and cooking. Each Thursday, a field trip will be scheduled to different attractions throughout the Chicagoland area. The CCS Summer Program offers students the opportunity to continue refining their academic skills over the summer. By keeping their minds active, students are better prepared when classes resume in the fall. While students enjoy the fun afternoon activities and field trips, parents appreciate their children’s productivity in an academic setting.

Saint Frances of Rome Parish will once again celebrate the season with the annual Summerfest. This event brings the entire community together and helps raise funds for the parish. This year’s Summerfest will take place on July 18-21. Parishioners, school families, and members of the community will be treated to carnival rides, delicious food, and live music. Last year’s event made about $40,000 in support of the parish and is expected to be a success once again. For more information on the Summerfest, please contact the parish at 708-652-2140 or visit the event website at www.sfr-school.org/summerfest.
Photo Booth

Share your vintage photos! Share SFR history with us! Mail a copy of your photos to: St. Frances of Rome Alumni Newsletter, 1401 S. Austin Blvd., Cicero, IL 60804 or e-mail your photos to: alumni@sfr-school.org

Thank you for sharing your St. Frances of Rome memories with us. We will publish as many articles and photos as space allows.

▼ We pulled this photo from our archives. Can you guess when this photo was taken? Are you or someone you know in this photo? Please send your comments to us at school.

Thank you to Mr. Robert Dahms for submitting our last issue’s photo booth picture. We had a surprising number of replies. The picture was correctly identified as the graduating class of 1945. Thank you to the following people for replying: John Carpenter, Dorothy Harper Bentz, and Patricia Holden Lebeau.
Tell us your St. Frances of Rome stories!

We want to find out more about our graduates! Write in and tell us your stories and best memories from your days at SFR. Tell us where you went to college and what you’re up to now. Share your wedding and birth announcements and don’t forget to send pictures! If you give us permission, we’ll publish these updates in future editions of this newsletter.

Name: ________________________________
Address: ______________________________
City: ______ State: _____ Zip: ______
Phone: __________ Graduation Year: ______
E-mail: ________________________________

☐ Yes, please publish my story and my e-mail address so that other classmates can contact me!

☐ Please don’t publish my information; it is for update purposes only.

Write in your update here, and attach more sheets if you have a lot of stories to share!

_________________________________________
_________________________________________
_________________________________________

Mail this form to:
SFR Alumni Newsletter
1401 S. Austin Blvd.
Cicero, IL 60804

Or e-mail your update to: alumni@sfr-school.org