



**July 22, 2022**

**St. John the Baptist in 2022-23**

**Dear SJB Families,**

We pray that your summer has been safe, enjoyable, and that you and your loved ones are in good health. This mid-summer letter includes general information about the coming school year including dates and faculty changes. Specific information about lunch, after-school activities, and After Care signup will go out in mid-August.

The school office will be closed next week -- July 25-29 – while I am on vacation. The office will reopen on August 1 from 9 am to 3 pm.

We welcome several new members of our faculty for the coming school year, as we express our appreciation to four departing teachers for their dedication and service to our students and families:

- Mrs. Seckers - 6th grade homeroom, 6th-8th grade science, 7th-8th grade math
- Dr. Garbee - 7th grade homeroom, 6th-8th math
- Mr. Shillingford – music in all grades
- Senora Chapa - 5th-8th Spanish

We pray for the health, happiness, and success of our former teachers and their loved ones.

### **Changes in Middle School Math Classes in 2022-23**

- 8th grade -- Ms. Calabrese and Ms. Irwin
- 7th grade – Ms. Calabrese and Mrs. Dalton
- 6th grade – Ms. Calabrese and Mrs. Dalton
- 5th grade – Ms. Calabrese and Mrs. Dalton

### **New Preschool Class for 3-Year-Olds**

SJB opens a new preschool classroom for 3-year-olds this year. Mrs. Regan and Mrs. Eaton will teach 4-year-olds in the existing preschool classroom. See the new faculty information to learn more about the team in the 3-year-old class.



### **--- Welcome, New SJB Faculty ---**

#### **Mr. Daly – Teacher – Science Grades 6-8 & Homeroom Grade 6**

Kevin Daly has taught science in middle school, high school, and college. He has trained agents at the FBI Academy. He was an agent and supervisor at the FBI. Most recently, Mr. Daly taught students and chaired the Science Department at the International High School of New Orleans.

Mr. Daly received a Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry from Xavier University of Louisiana and a Master's Degree in Biology from Tennessee State University.

"I love teaching science and providing information and guidance to my students so that the next generation can achieve their dreams," Mr. Daly said.

Mr. Daly is a native of New Orleans. He and his wife now live in Laurel, Md., where they enjoy gardening together. Mr. Daly also enjoys woodworking and music.

"It's my pleasure to join the Saint John the Baptist Family," Mr. Daly said.

Mr. Daly has state certification in science teaching in middle school and high school.

#### **Mr. Guerra – Teacher – Music**

Christopher G. Guerra retired in June 2022 from Montgomery County Public Schools, where he was a choral director and music educator for 20 years. He is the founder Emeritus of the Strathmore Children's Chorus and a founding member of the A. Mario Loiederman Middle School for the Creative and Performing Arts in Silver Spring. Mr. Guerra's choral ensembles achieved national recognition and consistently placed in competitions. In 2012, his Chamber Choir performed at the National Middle School Choral Directors Conference in Dallas, and he received Maryland Music Educators Association's Outstanding Teacher Award.

Mr. Guerra has directed choirs at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, and the Strathmore Music Center. Mr. Guerra attended the Chicago Music College, received a Bachelor's Degree in Music from Ball State University, and studied at the University of Maryland, Towson University, and George Mason University. He has conducted workshops and adjudicated stateside and abroad. He was music director for the Chicago and D.C. Churches of Christ and featured vocalist with the 566th Air Force Band.

His daughter is a choral director in Atlanta, Georgia, and his son is a project manager with Ruppert Landscaping Company. Mr. Guerra maintains a private voice and piano studio and lives in North Potomac with his wife, Dr. Veronica Guerra.

Mr. Guerra has Maryland certification in music teaching.



### **Ms. Stept – Teacher - Preschool -- Three-Year-Old Program**

Ashley Stept knew she wanted to be a teacher when she was five years old.

She began student teaching during high school and continued throughout college.

Miss Stept graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education from Stevenson University in May 2018 and Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education from Towson University in May 2021.

For the past four years, she has been the second grade teacher at Mother of God School in Gaithersburg.

Miss Stept is excited to start the 3-year-old program in the preschool at SJB. She said she looks forward to learning and growing with her students.

Outside of school, Miss Stept enjoys making crafts with her mom and sister and playing with her niece.

She also knows how to play the violin and tap dance.

Miss Stept has Maryland certification in early-childhood/elementary teaching.

### **Mrs. Lyon— Assistant Teacher — Preschool Three-Year-Old Program**

Helen Lyon has taught 1st grade and preschool. At SBJ, she will be assisting Miss Stept with our Preschool three-year-olds. Mrs. Lyon received a Bachelor's Degree in Biology from Cabrini College in Radnor, Pa. Helen worked as a medical laboratory technician before deciding to change careers and go into teaching. Mrs. Lyon taught children ages 3 and 4 at Four Corners Community Nursery School in Silver Spring for 23 years. Most recently, she taught first grade at Silver Oaks Cooperative School in Adelphi. Helen has a Maryland child-care certification as well as over 150 hours in early childhood education.

### **Seniorita Vargas – Spanish Teacher – Grades 5-8 – Social Studies Grade 5**

Victoria Vargas stepped in to teach middle-school Spanish last winter as a long-term substitute and will continue as an SJB teacher this year. Fluent in both English and Spanish, Seniorita Vargas hopes that her students may one day become bilingual. She loves teaching Spanish and all about Latin culture. In her free time, she enjoys baking, reading, and spending time with her dog. Seniorita Vargas is a proud Marylander through and through. She grew up just a 10-minute drive from SJB and remains close with her family. She is a graduate of the University of Maryland. Seniorita Vargas loves her family roots to El Salvador and visits any chance she gets.



### **Dr. Chakmakian-Lodge – School Counselor**

SJB has added a school counselor to its staff. Elisabeth Chakmakian-Lodge, a licensed social worker who has served children and families as a case worker and therapist for many years, will serve SJB students as a staff counselor on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays in 2022-23. Dr. Chakmakian-Lodge received her doctorate from Smith College in 2019, her Master's Degree in Social Work from the University of Maryland in 1998, and her Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from James Madison University in 1996. For the past several years, Dr. Chakmakian-Lodge has taught social work as an adjunct faculty member of the University of Maryland. Previously she worked as a psychotherapist in private practices and as a social worker and supervisor at mental-health clinics and social-service programs for children and families including the Kennedy Krieger Institute Therapeutic Foster Care Program. She and her husband, Dave, have two SJB children: Milo in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and Gus, who is heading to St. Vincent Pallotti High School after graduating from SJB in June.

### **Mrs. Aspanthiya-Gedara – SJB Delegating Nurse**

SJB's new designating nurse is Kailyn Aspanthiya-Gedara. As designating nurse, Mrs. Aspanthiya will supervise the SJB health room and medication technicians on the school staff. For the past 10 years, Mrs. Aspanthiya-Gedara has been a staff nurse at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Nursing from Catholic University and her Master's Degree in Nursing Leadership and Management from Western Governor's University. She and her husband, Dharsan, have two children at SJB: Amory in Kindergarten and Napalia in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

We are praying for our new teachers and grateful to them for responding to the Holy Spirit's call to Catholic education. They have heard about our wonderfully warm and welcoming SJB community. It brings me great joy to watch new staff members *feel that they belong* at St. John the Baptist.

The attached mid-summer memo and printable calendar are included for additional information.

Yours faithfully and respectfully,

Brian Blomquist  
Principal