



April 15, 2024

Dear St. William Parishioners,

Our world today is a more frightening place than it has ever seemed in times past. As administrators, we share parents' concerns about providing the safest possible school environment for our children—and, for that matter, all adults and children at any time. The “what if...” scenarios cause us all anxiety.

But we take comfort in the knowledge that our Lord and Savior, whose victory over evil we celebrate in this Easter Season, has not abandoned us to the power of the world, but that He has promised us to be with us always. When speaking of the little children, he told us, “I assure you, their angels in heaven constantly behold my heavenly Father’s face.” (*Matt 10:10*) Yet, as parents and school administrators we still need to cooperate with the Lord’s concern for his children, and to do what we can to ensure their safety.

This letter is intended to make you more aware of the safety measures that are already in place and others that are being planned, and to advise you that while, as administrators, we continue to take measures to enhance our children’s safe environment, we also need to elicit your cooperation in our efforts.

Also, you are probably aware that our emergency response procedures get reviewed and updated in collaboration with local law enforcement agencies. We are also blessed that our police station is located so near, and that the police response to any call is extremely quick. Staff members have received comprehensive training on emergency protocols, including lockdown drills, evacuation procedures, and first aid response. We continue to conduct regular drills to ensure preparedness for various scenarios. The school has a trained emergency response team that is composed of administrators and teachers who have additional CPR and first aid certifications.

Finally, we have some requests that we make of *school* parents that will help keep our environment safe:

1. All visitors during school hours, including parents, must enter at the office lobby doors (not the Activity Center doors) and receive a visitor’s pass. Parents in the building must not open doors to others; everyone must register at the office.
2. Personal deliveries for students from DoorDash, GrubHub, or any other vendor will not be accepted.
3. As noted in the parent/student handbook, cell phones must be turned off and stored at the school office.
4. Apple watches must not have phone or texting ability turned on. Not only can such access be disruptive, but games and social media can become potential vulnerabilities for predators to exploit. Let’s keep our kids safe.

In short, while no situation can ever be made invulnerable, we share all parents’ concern that we be alert to potential vulnerabilities and take appropriate steps to remediate them. If you have questions, please feel free to bring them to us. After all, we’re in this together.

In Jesus,

Rev. Michael G. Savickas
Pastor

Mrs. Betsy Gabrish
Principal

P.S. If you are interested in further detail, please see the next page.



What's been done:

- Perhaps you weren't aware of this, but if not, you will be pleased to learn that for years now we have had some safety items in place that other schools would be envious of.
 - Most notably, when the central corridor of the school was refurbished seven years ago, we took the extraordinary and expensive step of replacing all classroom doors with *fire-rated* doors and *premiere locking hardware*.
 - Not only are the children much better protected in case of fire, but the installed system is **far superior** to any retrofit security fixes you may have heard of.
- Another item, which you are probably aware of, is that for several years we have had electronic access (wipe card) controlling all the entrances to the school building and the Activity Center.
 - Last year we upgraded to a key-fob system, which is more secure, and then, last summer we installed additional areas of control.
 - We have security cameras at entry points and hallways that are monitored in the school office. Over the summer we added to our camera system. The combined cost for the additional key-fob points and cameras was over \$15,000.
- Just after school finished in June, we replaced all the windows in the school building, installing reflective glass that restricts outsiders looking into the building, while also providing *emergency egress* for every classroom. (Very important!) This project cost almost \$400,000.
- Last summer we installed a modern intercom/PA system so that all classrooms can quickly be alerted when needed, and that any classroom can contact the office in an emergency. That installation cost \$60,000.
- The total recent expenditures for safety and security is over \$475,000.

Responding to concerns this year:

No environment can be totally secure. It's always possible to identify weaknesses or vulnerabilities, but as we uncover them, we take steps to remediate those concerns.

- Easiest to address are procedural concerns, such as reminding staff to be certain to close doors after moving from one secure area to another.
- In another example, recently it was discovered that the west corridor doors of the Activity Center (where the restrooms are located) were not always being properly locked. We decided to remove the human element from the equation as much as possible. Although it cost over \$12,000, we decided to secure the entire corridor with a key-fob system. (An added benefit is that this solution also allows students to use the restrooms without being forced to wait until a teacher is available to monitor the corridor.)

What we're planning:

- We've also decided to enhance the security in the east corridor, especially at school lunchtime when children move from the school corridor into the Activity Center. Since this is a much more complicated and time-consuming revision to the building that involves architects, the fire marshal, and contractors, we are using volunteers for the remainder of the school year to act as hospitality greeters to the public, while monitoring the corridor.
- We anticipate the construction of the new security doors to begin this summer.