

## **New Principal for Holy Name of Jesus School**

March 25, 2020

Message from Father Mark Thibodeaux, SJ

Dear Holy Name of Jesus Family,

I hope that you are well during these challenging times. We are all deeply concerned for one another's health and for the wellbeing of our national and global community. We are concerned, too, that the students of Holy Name be given every opportunity to thrive within the limitations in which we find ourselves. Again and again, when I pray about this, I sense God telling me that God can make wonderful things spring out of this unusual experience. At its very core, our Christian Faith tells us that God has the power and the desire to turn every Good Friday into an Easter Sunday.

I'm writing to give you the good news that Kirsch Wilberg has been chosen as the new principal for Holy Name of Jesus School, beginning in the 2020-2021 academic year. Our principal search committee spent a great deal of time in prayerful reflection and discussion over the large number of candidates who applied for the position. In the end, the committee unanimously recommended Ms. Wilberg for the position.

Ms. Wilberg is a native of the New Orleans area and is a 1994 graduate of Mount Carmel Academy. She earned her B.F.A. from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in 1997. In 2013, Ms. Wilberg acquired her M.A. in Catholic School Leadership from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, TX and earned the distinction of outstanding graduate. The M.A. program at St. Mary's is a program designed specifically for educational leaders who desire to serve in the ministry of Catholic School education.

Ms. Wilberg began her teaching career teaching art and theatre as an adjunct teacher in lower-income schools surrounding the Lafayette area in the late 90's. After moving to San Antonio with her family, and serving as a stay-at-home mom for a few years, she began working at St. Peter Prince of the Apostles Catholic School in 2007 where she developed an early childhood program for students 18 months to 3 years old. In 2008, she began teaching again. While teaching theatre, art, and music to PK3 to 8th-grade students, Ms. Wilberg also served as the program director for numerous school-based initiatives and then eventually as principal at St. Peter's. She then moved to Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School in the San Antonio area for 2 years. (OLPH in San Antonio is a school very similar in size to Holy Name of Jesus.) After serving as a leader in the Archdiocese of San Antonio Catholic School communities for 9 years, Ms. Wilberg and her children moved back to New Orleans. For the past 4 years, she has served as Principal at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School in Belle Chasse. In her time there, she developed two strategic plans (one to support the mission of the school, and the other to address enrollment needs), and nearly all aspects of each plan have been fully accomplished. OLPH School is poised for success, and she is leaving the school in a very strong position. Ms. Wilberg is excited about bringing her strategic thinking and servant leadership style to HNJ, and she shares her enthusiasm for joining our school community in her enclosed letter of introduction.

Ms. Wilberg and I are looking forward to working in partnership to support our students, parents, teachers, and parishioners. Given these strange days of dealing with COVID19, we will need to be creative in the ways that we begin to introduce her into our community life. Please be patient with us as we take it one day at a time.

Many thanks to our principal search committee members: Kaitlin Southwick, Jim Lamy, Amy Edmond, Eileen Chao, Pat Talley and Paul Buras. Thanks, too, for the great work of the Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Schools, especially to Michael Buras, Carole Elliot, and Dr. RaeNell Houston.

A million thanks to Jessica Dwyer for her years of service to the school. Her passion and zeal as well as her great love for this community have been especially evident in the way she has led the school through these unusual days and weeks. I know that I speak for everyone as I say that we will all be praying for her as she moves forward in her own career path.

Please pray for Ms. Wilberg, for Ms. Dwyer and for our entire community. Let us ask the Lord to lead us to an ever brighter future as a Catholic school founded on the values of Christ.

Yours in Christ,

Father Mark E. Thibodeaux, SJ

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Message from Kirsch J. Wilberg

Dear Holy Name of Jesus School Community,

It is with great enthusiasm and excitement that I join the Holy Name of Jesus School Community as it is truly a blessing to be selected as the principal of such a prestigious, academically sound, and caring community. I come to Holy Name of Jesus with a diverse background of educational experiences. In my leadership roles over the course of the past 13 years, I have developed Early Childhood programs, directed licensed daycare classrooms, and positively influenced enrollment management. Moreover, I have developed marketing standards, reorganized admissions/enrollment processes, and revamped summer camp and aftercare practices. To more fully support students, I have developed curriculum goals based on student academic data, began positive behavior management systems, and strengthened school community outreach. Last school year, I also initiated a formalized inclusion program for students with learning differences, and I currently serve on the Superintendent's Committee for Students with Developmental Disabilities. Additionally, I have streamlined fundraising efforts, strengthened school budgets, improved enrollment management trends, and successfully fundraised for a new building, playground upgrades, and new computers, desks, and chairs. I am actively involved with students daily and have a strong presence around the school and in classrooms. I enjoy working in collaboration with teachers and helping students showcase our school. You may recognize me from this past January when I brought our OLPH School students to serve as the choir for the Archdiocesan-wide Catholic Schools week Mass where students sang and used American Sign Language to support the liturgy.

I join your school as a servant leader who is dedicated to supporting the mission of HNJ, and as I learned throughout my interview process, Fr. Thibodeaux's motto of cultivating Happy, Healthy, Holy, and Smart students:

Happy - My first priority is to continue to cultivate the strong and supportive school culture already present at Holy Name of Jesus. Over the next few months, I will spend time meeting with faculty and staff, getting to know families, and meeting students. While this may have to happen virtually, I am

committed to getting to become acquainted with as many of you as possible before school begins in August.

Healthy - I will support students to develop their God-given gifts and talents so they become well-rounded individuals prepared to effect change in the world. It is through cultivating the whole child, (mind, body, and soul) that creates a healthy and well-adjusted individual<sup>s</sup>. I will also partner with the athletic department and the food services program to ensure we are providing opportunities for students to form healthy habits.

Holy - It has always been a priority of mine to support the ministerial aspect of our Catholic Church, hence the Master's program designed specifically for Catholic School Leaders. My Catholic faith is always at the center of all of my life decisions, and God always seems to guide my steps along the proper path. It is my joy and honor to be able to share that with students. I look forward to supporting our students as they prepare for weekly Mass and also ensure that our Catholic faith is infused throughout all aspects of their daily lives.

Smart - While gathering information over the next few months, I will be able to strengthen and support the Holy Name of Jesus strategic plan and set academic goals for the 2020-2021 school year. My goal is to create data-driven academic goals and also establish individual student goals based on student performance and benchmark testing.

I have already been so warmly welcomed by the Holy Name of Jesus leadership team. I look forward to meeting each of you and learning how to fully support your families. I am excited to join the Holy Name of Jesus family and to become a Gator!

God bless,  
Kirsch J. Wilberg