

SFXSF 2015 UPDATE

On March 1, the Saint Francis Xavier School Fund (SFXSF) annual giving campaign for year 2015 was formally begun. Since its establishment twenty-two years ago, the SFXSF has been of significant help in promoting the mission of Catholic Education: providing faith based, quality academic education to the children here at Saint Francis Xavier School. In the spring edition of this newsletter we noted that as early as April 15, more than \$ 18,000 had already been donated to the fund. We are now happy to point out that by July 24, the total donated has risen to \$35,600. Since the annual giving campaign will continue until September 30th, (donations received after September 30th, will be attributed to SFXSF 2016) we remain optimistic about the ultimate outcome of SFXSF 2015.

As mentioned, in accordance with our normal practice the annual campaign ends on September 30th. We will thank all donors by name in our autumn newsletter. The names of donors of \$250 or more will appear on the SFXSF 2015 Roll of Honor which will be printed in that newsletter.

Every donation, regardless of amount, demonstrates to others commitment to the ministry of Catholic Education.

Our thanks are extended to all for your faithful support!

SFXSF 2015 SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER SCHOOL FUND

Enclosed is my contribution to the 2015 SFXSF Annual Appeal.

\$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ (other) _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ Class Year _____

Please make checks payable to: SFXSF 2015

Saint Francis Xavier Parish House * 2319 Green Street * Philadelphia, PA 19130



St. Francis Xavier School Alumni & Friends Association News

Newsletter: Volume 23, Issue 4, Summer 2015

Love's Labors Lost: The End of an Era



Many passersby stopped to watch the building at 24th and Green Streets as it came down: neighbors, dog walkers, joggers, tourists. Buildings in the city get torn down every day. But if you are a parishioner, or an alumnus/a of the school, or you know someone who was, the demolition of the Convent of St. Francis Xavier was tinged with nostalgia and sadness for a bygone time. One woman standing on the church step said, "I remember watching that building go up." Neither she nor the building was very old.

The Sister Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (known as the IHM nuns, or even more familiarly as the "Macs") began teaching at SFX in 1869. To put it in an historical context, this was shortly after the end of the Civil War and the opening of the Philadelphia Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in 1864. The Sisters commuted to the school from St. Paul's Convent at 10th and Christian Streets, presumably by horse and buggy.

Eighty years after the Sisters began teaching there, the corner stone for the Convent of St. Francis Xavier was laid on August 28, 1949. His Eminence Dennis Cardinal Dougherty was Archbishop of Philadelphia, and twenty-five Sisters were teaching in the school, plus a Sister principal and a Mother Superior for a total of 27 nuns. There were no lay teachers those years. When Miss Butler arrived in 1982 there were ten Sisters teaching in the school. About 20 Sisters lived in the convent, including Sisters teaching at Hallahan High School and the Gesu School.

Mass with the faculty for the opening of school year in those days was celebrated in the convent chapel. The opening faculty meeting and luncheon also took place in the convent. Although it seemed to be thriving in the 80s, school enrollment gradually declined and so did vocations. There were six nuns living there when the Oratory arrived in 1990. The last two Sisters moved out in 2003 and the Convent closed.

Though different groups were interested, nothing ever materialized to use the building for another purpose, and the convent remained vacant for eleven years. While the nuns lived there, the parish paid the heating and lighting bills. Expenses did not end when the Sisters departed: there were plumbing issues and continued deterioration of the building in the last years; it was little surprise when the property was finally sold in 2014.

And so piece-by-piece last month, down it came. In its place will be ten townhouses, part of the "Green Street Estates." Perhaps a little girl will be saying 66 years from now: "I remember watching those houses being built." Will she remember that a convent of dedicated teaching Sisters once stood there? Hope she does.

BREAD OF LIFE

It was a beautiful day inside and out on Sunday, April 26, when seventeen students from SFX and the CCD class received the Eucharist for the first time. Preparation started well in advance and reached a high point with their special retreat day the Friday before, which included a visit to the Convent of Divine Love and making rosaries.

The countdown week began with a “Pizza and Penance” event for the communicants and their parents. The pizza part came first with small but important gifts given out: a prayer book, a scapular, a rosary, and a pin to wear First Communion day.

Then came the Penance part. Parents and students walked to church and, under the guidance of Father Paul, confessed their sins in preparation for receiving the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Luke Ertel, Coordinator for Catholic Formation and Evangelization, organized the day; Patricia Schuyler, Coordinator for CCD assisted. Third grade teacher Mrs. Danielle DiCola-Hayes provided daily inspiration for these young witnesses to Christ. It was a very exciting time for the students, and a great day for SFX parish.



UP, UP AND AWAY!



“First in Math” is a great online program for reinforcement of skills and enrichment in—Math! Students in grades 1 through 8 can log on and take off at their own speed, and fly they do: for the 3rd year in a row, SFX is one of the highest performing schools, scoring in the top 50 of the participating schools in the nation.

Mrs. Theresa O’Brien oversees the program and sets up the logins. Each morning at assembly, there is an announcement for the “Players of the Day,” one from each class with the most points from the day before. Friday there is a special announcement for the “Player of the Week,” who receives a certificate and a dress down pass. Also, the class of the week is awarded the special “First in Math” trophy. The top five students at the end of the year get to attend a ceremony for Archdiocesan school participants.

Math is considered a universal language, and Suntext International Inc. with its global approach to business developed the program. The SFX Home and School Association subsidizes the cost of \$7.25 per student per year. This money is well spent with concrete results in student improvement. Teachers agree it bolsters classroom instruction and helps master skills.

Each classroom builds a Wall of Fame as students accumulate points. They love measuring their progress. Teachers also can login and check individual student progress, as can the program supervisor. This is SFX’s fourth year in the program. The trajectory for progress is like a homerun ball sailing up and out of reach. With “First in Math” the students never stop reaching.

SFX ALUMNI & FRIENDS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REUNION MASS

While we continue to work on developing ways through which our school’s Alumni & Friends Association can interact on a regular basis - e. g. an occasional Beef and Beer, an annual Mass & Communion Breakfast etc. - we are not there yet. We are pleased to announce however, that a central element of any such annual get together, an Alumni & Friends Reunion Mass, is scheduled to be celebrated for our second consecutive year on Sunday October 11, at 9:30 a.m. All of our readers are warmly invited to join us for Holy Mass on that day.

A PAPAL VISIT TO PHILADELPHIA

This September, the Parkway will be the place to be when Pope Francis comes to celebrate with the World Meeting of Families. The Convention Center is expected to draw 15,000 people during the week of September 21, and as many as two million may come to the Parkway for the weekend Festival of Families, which the Holy Father will attend.

The scheme is large with our own Philadelphia Orchestra performing with the well-known Italian pop/classical singer Andrea Bocelli on Saturday. Sunday festivities culminate with Pope Francis celebrating an outdoor Mass at 4:00 pm. Our entire city is affected by the sheer magnitude of it all. SFX and all the Archdiocesan schools will be closed Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of that week to encourage families to participate in the events. Teachers and principals are especially encouraged to volunteer at the Convention Center, since they already have child protection clearances. Miss Butler will be helping at the Youth Congress with activities for children.

SFX has a direct involvement as well: the Philadelphia Highway Patrol will use the schoolyard to contain the motorcycles, and our gym will serve as a gathering space for security personnel. Not to worry: SFX and every other institution on or near the Parkway has been looked over by the Secret Service in preparation for the Papal visit to maximize security. For a moment, we will be the center of the world’s attention. Lots of people are working hard to make it safe, smooth, and spiritually uplifting for all.

THE ICE CREAM SOCIAL: TRÈS BON!

The end of the year celebration matched fine palates for ice cream with delightful *bon mots* from the French Club for an evening social that brought students from all grades together with their parents. The younger students of Mrs. Eliane Markus sang in French for the audience. The older students introduced themselves and told about their favorite book or hobby--in French, and Mrs. Markus translated into English so all could understand.

The French Club, which meets for an hour once a week, provides immersion in the language and culture of France. Mrs. Markus has noted that many adults seem to have found their own exposure to a second language in school something of a torment to be endured. She would like her students to learn when very young, almost without thinking about it—like riding a bike or swimming. Students are invited to learn, and the drills are so painless it’s like eating ice cream.

For her older students, the exposure gives them a leg up when the time comes for formal language study in high school. Some students are so motivated that they study between class meetings, and the practice really pays off. Mrs. Markus said even parents noticed the pride and pleasure in the students’ eyes as they demonstrated their mastery at the social.

The question is: was it pride in their accomplishment or the ice cream that created all the happiness at the social? Whatever the answer, to all who contributed, *merci beaucoup!*

GRADUATION 2015

This past June, eighteen students graduated from SFX to the cheers and good wishes of parents and friends. The students in this class garnered over \$50,000 in scholarships and tuition grants. Among the prizewinners were Julia Alexandrakis who won the award for General Excellence, and Angelina Maniero who received the Josephine C. Connelly Achievement Award.

The Class of 2015 was always ready to get involved, from choir to sports--with a pancake breakfast or spaghetti dinner in-between. And let’s not forget their great participation in the Reading Olympics and Science Fair.

Now they are moving on to various high schools. Seven in the class are going to Hallahan High School for Girls; four to Roman Catholic High School for Boys; two to Nazareth Academy; one to Friends Select; one to Central; one to West Catholic; one to Neumann/Goretti, and one to Cardinal O’Hara. Congratulations, good luck, and God’s blessings go with you all!

