

Jr. High Back to School Night

September 21, 2006

As I said last year, we are in a township with fine public schools, and we reside in an area surrounded by magnificent private academies; still, you chose to enroll your sons and daughters here at St. James. As your Pastor, I do not take this for granted! I have no doubt that your children will be good for St. James School and I pray that we, clergy, faculty and support staff will be good for your children.

This year, in addition to the creation of the 8th period and numerous electives, about which Mr. Kenny will speak momentarily, we are putting a little more emphasis on “Character development.” What do I mean by this? In short, not only do we want your children to achieve academic excellence, we also want to take these good children of God and mold them into even sharper images of Christ so that, when they graduate, they will leave our school not only academically prepared for the challenges of high school, but also healthy, wholesome and well-rounded. How do we intend to build on character development? In concert with Mr. Kenny, our faculty and support staff—and banking on your parental cooperation, we are going to reward positive behavior, both individual and group dynamics and punish negative behavior, such as bullying, purposely excluding others from participating in playground activities during recess, shunning other students on field trips,

writing slanderous and/or hurtful things on emails or notes, anything that smacks against the face of each child's God-given dignity. As I told the students in an assembly earlier this month—I can't make you love one another, but I can make you respect one another. In sum, by encouraging students to see the value in tolerance, mutual respect and using Jesus as our model, we want to foster an environment where no student will dread going to lunch in the cafeteria, recess on the playground, a dance in the gym or a field trip—all of which should be pleasant, joyful events. In addition, in the upper level religion classes, we've added a textbook on morality so that students will have been exposed to the teaching of the Church concerning right and wrong choices. Since life is full of choices, and morality has to be taught and learned, it is only fitting that we cap our religious formation program with an overview of Catholic principles which will empower our students to face a challenging world which is not always black and white but rather shades of gray. St. James School has the best interest of every student at heart, and by accentuating character development, we will strive to instill values and norms which will prepare our children not only to survive in a topsy-turvy world but to thrive and succeed as well. Thank you all for your cooperation, your support and may God bless you all.

Fr. Glenn