

Good morning. Thank you so much for being here today. It is so wonderful to come together and celebrate Catholic Schools, but specifically St. John Fisher! Being a life-long product of Catholic education, having attended Catholic schools my entire life from grade school through my graduate experience, I am a firm believer, champion, and ambassador of Catholic education. I grew up in a home where both my mother and father worked in Catholic schools. My Mom worked in the development office at St. Rita High School for many years and my Dad was a teacher, administrator and coach at De La Salle, St. Rita and St. Ignatius for much of his career. To say it is a natural fit for me to now be serving this Catholic school in this capacity would be an understatement. Prior to my experience at SJF, my tenure included teaching at Montini Catholic High School and working at

St. Xavier University. Catholic education is deeply ingrained in my upbringing. It has contributed greatly to my mindset, thought process and overall with my family and friendships makes me who I am. My husband and his family are also life-long products of Catholic education and together, we chose to move to this strong neighborhood in order to be a part of this close-knit community and send our three boys to St. John Fisher. I think it is important for you to know we made this choice almost four years ago, long before I began working here. Truly, my first role at SJF was as a parent. Taking this path has benefited me greatly thus far as I was already familiar with the incredible and faithful parent-base we have here at SJF. This year, I chose to add the role of 8th grade English Language Arts teacher and now principal to my resume. From the moment I walked into the building this year, I was beyond impressed with not only the happy and talented

students, but the inspiring and dedicated teachers and staff, the hard-working maintenance crew and the supportive and loving parents. Together, we are all making a conscious choice and sacrifice to commit to SJF. We all believe in the morals and teachings of what SJF and Catholic education are all about. So, what are we all about? Why do we make this sacrifice? In my opinion, Catholic education infuses strong values and morals along with the important notion that we are all in this together in our own family and in God's family. We have a responsibility to always do the right thing and to care for the ones around us. And in the event that we might make a poor choice or a mistake, we own up to it, we learn from it, we forgive one another and we try to be better the next day. We are partnering together to produce morally sound, loving, kind, thoughtful, empathetic, responsible and intelligent students. At SJF, the sense of taking care of

others is ever-present in everything we do. The older students are frequently partnering with our younger students throughout the day to ensure they feel welcomed, cared for and happy. Whether it be the 8th graders who **volunteer** to sit and eat lunch with the kindergarteners or assist with walking them back to their classes, or our school as a whole breaking up and partnering with their prayer partners to learn a new stem project, or to say a prayer for a loved one or each other, there is a strong sense that we are a community and a family of believers who are all in this together to make the world around us a better place. We have a responsibility to one another. Not only do we serve each other, but our students serve the community at large. Service is one of the most important opportunities we can provide our children and something that makes Catholic education so unique. Our curriculum is rooted in this. Our children are very blessed and

fortunate. One of the reasons SJF is so successful is because of the spirit and generosity of the families and parishioners. The more we lead with service and demonstrating the importance of giving back in this world, we create a better environment for all now and in the future. At SJF, we develop not just the mind, but more importantly the spirit of each student. In each classroom we are fostering a strong faith and an emphasis and awareness of God. Without this consciousness, we would be sorely lost. In a world that can seem so daunting, polarized and negative at times, it is important to not lose sight of this approach because truly, the need for God and moral values are needed now more than ever. The sense of community-Catholic education is very important to the entire parish. In fact the vitality and the identity of the parish community is wrapped up in our school. A greater sense of caring for all people, from all walks of life and a

commitment to go out every day and try to make the world a better place is wrapped up in our daily teachings and interactions and modeled by our fearless student and parish leaders and tenacious teachers in our school and community each day.

Personal integrity and the life lessons learned in Catholic schools are essential with the primary emphasis being others first and self second. As we reflect on the second reading today, Scripture tells us, "...Now the body is not a single part, but many. God has so constructed the body...that each part may have the same concern for one another. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy." As the reading instructs us, we are all one body at St. John Fisher. Family and community engagement are essential to be a truly successful school. But it doesn't just happen. It must be intentionally designed. When it is present, we must take the time to celebrate it

and learn from it. Our 8th graders will demonstrate this message that we are better together. The students, parents, faculty, school board, alumni, church and community including all of its many facets such as: the FSA, Women's Club, Holy Name Society, Athletics, Youth Ministry, our Fundraising committees, etc. all play an indispensable role. We need this to remain the focus of our strong community to keep moving forward during this pivotal moment in Catholic education. When anyone of us succeeds, we all feel that joy, when one struggles or suffers, we all experience that challenge. We are not alone, yet part of a larger group and our sole purpose is to make our school, community and ultimately the world a better place. And together, we can. This quote from Mother Teresa is fitting for today, "I can do things you cannot. You can do things I cannot. But together **PAUSE**, we can do great things."

