Be Merciful as your Father is Merciful

Coming back to school can be exciting, scary, and even overwhelming at times. During teacher inservice week, the staff was concerned with curriculum, classrooms, and listening to speakers that taught the best strategies of success for students in the classroom. One of the messages many staff took away from the moment resonated from our School of Faith instructor and also Fr. Tom. How are we going to lead our children in their faith? I think that teachers and parents as well could be overwhelmed with such a task. How can we take care of our own faith and also be trusted to lead these precious little people? Well, God has once again made us realize that we just have to pay attention to the little things to know that we are doing okay. As teachers witnessed this week, the students are picking up on our actions and words more than we think. From the beauty of the singing and participation in Mass to a group of older students leading the small ones through the halls, we can see God working miracles through these children. How do we show mercy? Is it by helping others? Can we be a listening ear? Do we take the time to pray with someone when they are down? One of the teachers shared how she overheard a student consoling another when they were upset. He told her it was all going to be okay, “God would make sure of it.” Thank you for sharing your children with us. We are blessed to help them on this journey in faith and academics.
How Do We Show Mercy?

Thoughts from a new Ascension Family

I have written a plethora of emails about how Pope Francis makes me bend; how he makes me uncomfortable; how he is moving me and changing me. I have shared that most of the time, I really don't WANT to be changed in the ways he's challenging me. It's painful and difficult! BUT, I am learning to see these moments as opportunities for holiness! During his pontificate, I have become accustomed to preparing myself for some stretching, self-reflection, and growing every time I read our Holy Father's words (I'm also learning to make sure the source I read his words from is accurate!). In an ironic way, I'm learning to LOVE the way I've been challenged. I'm learning not to mind this ONE person causing me discomfort. You know what they say, "No pain. No gain." However, just as I was getting comfortable being uncomfortable, I was in for a blow! It seems that Pope Francis has a partner in crime... our priest!!

As you may know, beginning on December 8 (the Immaculate Conception of Mary), Pope Francis has declared a Jubilee Year of Mercy! In anticipation and support of the Pope, Ascension School is also focusing on mercy with Jesus' words, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36) at the heart of the school year. At All School Mass this morning, Father talked about what mercy means. He said it is a difficult word to understand. However, the best translation he had heard was that being merciful meant being kind. He challenged the children (and adults) to every day do one kind thing for someone else. He encouraged them, to every night before falling asleep, tell God the one kind thing they did (examination of conscience). Father shared that if we can train ourselves to always look for one way to be kind each day, our hearts will be transformed.

What?!! Add one more thing to my already endless lists?! Add one more thing to my day, when some days I can't even get the dishes done?! Add one more thing to try to do to be holy?! Which ultimately means adding one more thing to my failures for the day!! Don't you know that some days it takes everything in me to not be rude and hateful?! On those days, it would be IMPOSSIBLE to do something kind!!

In the middle of the tantrum going on inside my head, I stopped. As it always is, one child had to be escorted out of Mass. I don't know the reason and can only assume that he was not feeling well. I watched as this young boy had fear and anguish on his face. I watched him approach his teacher who quickly jumped out of her pew and lovingly wrap her arm around the young man. I then witnessed this boy's body melt. It was as if all he needed was some warmth and his worries melted away. He still looked like he was in pain and about to be sick, but the worry and fear was completely gone. That's when it hit me, THAT was one kind thing! THAT was mercy! That one small, instinctual act by a teacher was exactly what Father was asking us to do. Just one kind thing. Suddenly, the litany in my head changed. I was no longer "yelling" and overwhelmed, I was excited! I could see another opportunity for holiness! More stretching and growing! In that moment I decided that this was something we could do as a family. A way for us to send the message to our children that we are a team with the school. A way for us to bond as a family, but most importantly, a way for us to grow in mercy. One kind thing doesn't have to be huge and announced. It doesn't require some grand plan. Being merciful can mean being aware and attentive. Today, add Father's challenge to your list. Do one kind thing for someone else. The possibilities to show kindness are as endless as the mercy our Father shows us every day. But, remember to do so for God's glory, not your own. Not only do we want to live Jesus' words and, "Be merciful just as your Father is merciful" but also, "By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples." (John 15:8) Let the stretching, growing, and discomfort begin!!
From Mr. Legler’s desk...

Living Virtues

What is virtue? A virtue is a holy habit. A holy habit is called a virtue while a bad habit is called a vice. Habits grow by practice. God always gives us the grace to choose and do what is good. If we think about what is right and open our hearts to God, we will make good choices and grow in virtue. Virtues make us free, happy, and holy.

Where did ACS get the idea of making the virtues a central theme to the school? What we call the “Living Virtues” is actually derived from a program called VBRD, or Virtue Based Restorative Discipline. VBRD is a program developed in the Archdiocese of St. Louis by Lynne Lang and pioneered by several Catholic schools in the St. Louis Archdiocese. VBRD not only focuses on how to address anti-social behaviors but also teaches us how to live the virtues. VBRD is a way for parents and ACS to work together to provide a safe learning environment that fosters our Catholic values, faith development, stewardship and academics in each student.

This year at ACS we will focus on a different virtue each quarter: 1st-Faith, 2nd-Generosity, 3rd-Stewardship, 4th-Reverence. We will also continue our all-encompassing virtue of Unity the entire year which will symbolizes are continued efforts to be unified a student body, staff, and community. All grades K-8 will learn and understand the virtue with the same definitions so that all our students become familiar with the particular meaning of each virtue. Virtue is not something just to know, but to do. Students will not only discuss what virtue looks like in a variety of social situations, read and discuss scripture on the virtues, learn about Saints who led virtuous lives, but they will also role play social scenarios to better understand how to truly live the virtues. We are “living virtues”!

We are excited for our 1st quarter virtue of faith! What is faith? Faith is believing all that God has revealed to us. Faith is one of the theological virtues that God gives to us in baptism. Through it, we are able to believe everything that God says through His word in scripture and in sacred tradition. We increase our faith in God by studying and thinking about what He has told us and then turning to Him with our whole heart and saying, “Lord, I believe, increase my faith!” Please be sure to ask your children about the virtue of faith this quarter and engage conversation with them about what they are learning at school. Be on the lookout for more on the virtue of faith to be coming home soon!
WATCH D.O.G.S Program

We hope to launch the WATCH D.O.G.S program in the fall. WATCH D.O.G.S. (Dads Of Great Students) is an innovative father involvement, educational initiative of the National Center For Fathering. There are two primary goals of the WATCH D.O.G.S. program.

1) To provide positive male role models for the students, demonstrating by their presence that education is important.

2) To provide extra sets of eyes and ears to enhance school security and reduce bullying.

WATCH D.O.G.S. began in 1998 in a single school in Springdale, Arkansas and has since grown into a national recognized program that has brought hundreds of thousands of fathers and father figures into the school classrooms and hallways across the country, creating millions of hours of “in school” volunteer time and having a tremendously positive impact on the educational process. Today more than 4,704 schools in 46 states plus DC participate in WATCH D.O.G.S. Currently, there are WATCH D.O.G.S. programs in China, Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Barbados.

For more information, please visit the website: [http://www.fathers.com/watchdogs/watch-dogs-faqs/](http://www.fathers.com/watchdogs/watch-dogs-faqs/)

Living Virtues Parent Committee

As part of the Living Virtues program at ACS we would love your help! Have you heard your children talking about the virtues at home and have ideas for us at school? Would you like the chance to meet with ACS staff members who help organize virtue activities to give your input? We are looking for a small group of parents that can meet periodically throughout the year to give us feedback and support as we plan virtue lessons and activities for all grade levels. We will also have several projects & activities that go home for families to do together that we will need your assistance with (ex. Family crosses, Advent calendar, 86 Days of Summer, etc.). If you have any questions or would like to join us, please email me at: alegler@acseagles.org. Thank you for your consideration!
Arrival and Dismissal Reminders:

Thank you for making this first week of drop-off and pick-up safe and smooth! In order to make sure our car lines run as efficiently as possible while keeping the safety of our students at the forefront of our attention, here are a couple of tips & reminders as we move forward:

Arrival & Dismissal

- Be mindful of traffic on both 127th St and Grant: please do not block either of these streets for safety reasons and also to avoid unwanted tickets from our friends at the O.P. police department!
- In the morning do not drive through the church parking lot: this causes a safety hazard for many others. We are asking everyone to join the car line. If your child needs help with carrying a project, supplies, etc., please park on the third tier and walk them across. All other families should be in the line.
- Dismissal: Please remember to put your name cards tucked in your visor for us to see. This will allow the teachers to see them well in advance before stopping for your student(s).
- Cell phones: talking and/or texting during arrival & dismissal is discouraged. Last year we saw many near-accidents due to drivers on their cell phones.

Carpool (Tier):

- Please arrive and park before 3:15. Please get to the parking lot on time when picking up for carpool. If you are late, please park on the third tier.
- When you arrive, please carefully back in to your parking lane so that you can easily see children when exiting. This is purely for student safety reasons as we have had some near misses with cars backing out and almost hitting children when exiting.
- Please remain in your cars (except on Witness Wednesdays! 😊).

Adoration Pick-Up

- This area of pick-up is for our students in grades K-3 only.
- Please do not use the Adoration line if you are carpooling with other families. If you are carpooling, please use the Tiered parking lots to arrange pick-up.

Please know that we appreciate your cooperation and support. We must all work together to keep our students safe. Thank you!
After School Y-Care at ACS

There are still open spots available for our YMCA after school program! You can still register online for the 2015-16 school for those families interested in full-time care.

Y Club is our before and after school care program, which provides a safe and nurturing environment for your children to learn, grow, and develop social skills. Our qualified, trained staff engages youth in active and purposeful play in a way that encourages them to exercise their bodies and their minds. With Y Club before and after school care, children in kindergarten through 12 years of age will enjoy and benefit from:

- **Homework enrichment** – enhances and supports school day learning while providing youth with homework support
- **Physical activity and healthy snacks** – youth are provided with the opportunity to enjoy healthy snack choices along with 30 minutes of physical fitness daily
- **Small and large group activities** – youth make meaningful and intentional choices with hands on activities focusing on arts and humanities, STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics), nutrition education and service learning
- **Focus on building community** – focus on building positive relationships and enhancing conflict resolution skills through team building activities and day-to-day interactions with peers and Y associates
- **Youth voice and leadership** – opportunities for youth to provide input in their Y Club, from helping to develop daily activities and snack menus to leading activities with peers
- Parents will enjoy the affordable weekly fees and the convenience of a state licensed program.

Click on the following link for more information and registration details:

Educonnect

In an effort to be more streamlined, we have started to put more items on the Educonnect website. We have posted a link to Educonnect at the top of www.acseagles.org. We will let you know when the official switch will take place. At this current time, we have lunch menus, calendar, teacher web sites, and newsletters on that page. You should have received another copy of the usernames and passwords for Educonnect at Back to School night. Please contact the office if you did not. Thank you for your patience!

Educonnect website: www.acseagles.eduk12.net
Welcome back to the 2015-2016 school year! We are so excited to have all of our students and families with us this year and we anticipate a wonderful, productive school year ahead of us. Here are some ways that might be able to give your student (and you😊) a positive start to this school year.

- **Send your child’s teacher an email.** Don’t lobby for anything in the email; just write a friendly “I am ready for the new school year and looking forward for my child to be in your class” note. Let them know that you are ready, willing, and able to work with them!

- **Understand the school’s communication policy.** Do you know how to check for homework assignments and grades? Does the school have your correct phone number for the School Messenger phone system?

- **Plan out breakfast and lunches for each week.** It is so important for students to come to school having eaten a nutritional breakfast to get the most out of their learning experience. Also, don’t forget to send those “snacks” for snack time. And something yummy for lunch!

- **Find one child in his/her new class that they are excited about being in their class and have a play date with them.** Children might worry that there will be no one they like or that they will have no one to talk to and play with. Encourage them to meet new friends and include lots of people in their play activities.

- **Make an agreement with each child on how you are going to wake them up, some kids respond better to one way of awakening than another.** Being organized and getting up and out on time are big challenges. Don’t forget, all clothes should be laid out the night before, and backpacks ready to go.

- **Tuck small notes in their backpacks, sports bag or lunch.** Write things like “you are brave” or “have the best day ever”.

- **Talk to them about their day at school.** Be sure and don’t stick with the old “how was school” question. Ask open ended questions every day. Examples: Who do you sit next to in class? What was lunch like? What’s your new teacher like?

- **Think about your child’s individual personality, strengths, and weaknesses.** Think through a few reasons you are sure this is going to be a great year for him/her. Like maybe your child struggles taking tests, but you emphasize the positive of their good organizational skills and how they always get their homework done.

- **End the first week with a celebration.** Go to dinner, have a special dinner at home, go on a picnic, etc. Ask what their favorite things were the first week of school, and what they are looking forward to for the rest of the year.
We will be starting a new group for middle school students. There will be more information coming soon!

“We’re a group of educated, determined students in the Midwest who have committed to redefining beauty for everybody. We are REbeL, a student-driven, peer education program designed to address body image issues and disordered eating. But we aren’t like most organizations. We drive change – in the way people view themselves, in their self-confidence, in their understanding of beauty. We are a group of students making a profound impact. And we urge you to join the REbeLution.”

**Dates to Remember:**

August 24: 1st Full Day for Kindergarten  
August 24-27: MAP testing for Gr. 4-8  
August 25: Gr. 5-8 Mass 8 am  
August 26: Gr. 1-4 Mass 8 am  
August 28: Spirit Day  
September 1: All School Mass 8 am  
MAP testing - Gr. 3 - September 8th  
September 4: No School, Teacher Inservice  
September 8: All School Mass, 8 am  
September 11: Jeans Days, ACS/CYO  
Spiritwear and jeans  
September 13: Confirmation Parents  
Mtg. - 6:30 pm  
September 15: All School Mass 8 am  
September 18: Spirit Day, Spiritwear and uniform bottoms

**Needed:** If you are able to send in 1-2 boxes of Kleenex for the school we would greatly appreciate it. We are trying to be proactive before the runny nose season comes upon us.

**Catholic Education Foundation:** If you still have sheets from the summer service project they are due by next Friday, the 28th. You still have time to do one more service project! We are excited about the several forms turned in and will announce the total next week in an email and on our Facebook page. Thanks for helping fund Catholic Education!