

THE blarney stone

A PUBLICATION FOR THE COMMUNITY
OF NOTRE DAME PREPARATORY SCHOOL
AND MARIST ACADEMY

Head of school
Fr. Leon Olszamowski discusses
the future of Catholic education and
his beloved Notre Dame.

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'Miracle school' a leading light in Catholic education

In a summary of trend data cited in a report by the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) titled *United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools 2014-2015: The Annual Statistical Report on Schools, Enrollment, and Staffing*, in the 10 years since the 2005 school year, 1,648 Catholic schools were reported closed or consolidated, while 336 school openings were reported. NCEA also said that the number of students in Catholic schools declined by 481,016, or 19.9%.

Total U.S. Catholic school student enrollment for the current academic year is estimated to be at 1,939,574, according to the NCEA, with 1,359,969 in elementary and middle schools and 579,605 in secondary schools.

But what perhaps is least surprising from the report is the breakdown of religious vs. laity in Catholic school staffing. Full-time equivalent professional staff in Catholic schools in the U.S. numbered 150,709, with 97.2% laity (lay women: 75.2%; lay men: 22.0%); and 2.8% religious/clergy (sisters: 1.9%; brothers: 0.4%; priests: 0.5%)

At Notre Dame Preparatory School and



Marist Academy, students are blessed to have three Marist priests and one brother on staff, plus a Benedictine brother in the upper division and a Franciscan sister teaching in the school's middle division, all of which might make NDPMA an outlier

when compared with other Catholic schools in southeast Michigan.

Since 1606, when Franciscan missionaries opened the first Catholic school in America in St. Augustine, Florida, and 1810, when St. Elizabeth Ann Seton,

with the support of Archbishop John Carroll, opened the first parochial school in Emmitsburg, Maryland, Catholic schools in the U.S. have served as bulwarks of high academics, moral development and faith. So what was true through the 20th century is still true today even though those "bulwarks" number far fewer.

No one knows this better than NDPMA head of school Fr. Leon Olszamowski, a Marist priest with a PhD, who was educated nearly exclusively in Catholic schools and is now helming one of Michigan's highest performing private, independent schools.

Olszamowski remembers a time in the Catholic Church when Mass was in Latin, women's heads were always covered in church, priests were called by their last names, and parochial school classrooms usually included more than 35 kids.

He says that in an increasingly secularized world with great change in the church happening at a far greater pace than ever before, a school like Notre Dame can still make faith—particularly the Catholic faith—as relevant to students as it was for his generation.

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Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy provides its diverse student body a Catholic and internationally recognized college-preparatory experience of lasting value.



2013 NOTRE DAME ALUM IS BUSY
ON TWO CONTINENTS (PAGE 2)

From northern Michigan to South America and back again

Climbing mountains, biomedical engineering and the Spanish language are keeping 2013 alum busy on two continents.

Carly Joseph has always been an athlete. She loves to run and her time at Notre Dame included significant contributions to Irish softball and cross-country teams.

But it seems her physical endeavors are picking up the pace even more just as her academics demand more and more of her time and attention.

Joseph is currently pursuing degrees in biomedical engineering and international Spanish from Michigan Tech, located in the state's upper peninsula. However, her studies during the summer had her in Valparaiso, Chile, where she was taking Spanish at Pontifical Catholic University. But when her day was done in the classroom, Joseph headed to the nearest mountain.

"Rock climbing is one of my newer hobbies, and it nicely complements my other mountain passions, which include snowboarding," she said. "Some of my favorite times while living here in Valparaiso have been climbing and chatting with locals on and around the mountains. I've been doing both outdoor and indoor climbing here. I've met some incredibly talented climbers and made lots of new friends there."

It's not the first time she's been on the mountains in South America.

After many years of competitive snowboarding, she made a transition into backcountry snowboarding toward the end of her time

at NDP. Since then, she said she's grown to love mountain sports in a whole new way. "In 2013, I took my first avalanche safety certification course. In 2014, I became a Wilderness First Responder. And this year started with an unsupported 35-day mountaineering expedition in the back country of Chilean Patagonia."

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

Joseph acknowledges that even though it seems like all of these outdoor passions may not be the most relevant activities toward her academic career path, she firmly believes in complementing the rigors of high-intensity academics with the endorphins and adrenaline she experiences from climbing, running and the like.

"The mountains have this magical way of teaching so many life skills—humility, perseverance and risk assessment, to name a few—that help me in my day-to-day life," she said. "Climbing, running and snowboarding continue to allow me to meet people from all over the world and experience different cultures. All of these experiences are ultimately what keep my brain alive, engaged, and creative, and I believe they actually help me achieve my goals in academics."

Achieving her academic goals, it appears, is something Joseph is quite familiar with. She graduated Notre Dame as one of the Class of 2013's valedictorians with a cumulative grade point average of 4.356. She also was a member of the National Honor Society,

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Notre Dame alum Carly Joseph ('13) is at the top of a mountain in Chilean Patagonia in South America.



LEADING LIGHT, from page 1

“The world in which we live is far different than the one I grew up in and even more different than the world my parents grew up in,” said Olszamowski. “Yes, secularization is a process that glorifies the good that humans are, but we know full well that man cannot always be the measure of all things.”

Olszamowski said humans need a relationship with the One that called them into being to fulfill their destiny.

“One of our most important roles as Catholic educators is to ensure that students come to understand that humans, though created in God’s image, can fall astray by the exercise of an inadequately or badly formed free will,” he said. “We try to teach them a very old Catholic doctrine: humanity without God’s helping grace tends to self-destruct. We as individuals are not the center of our own universe—the creator is, and the creator knows best.”

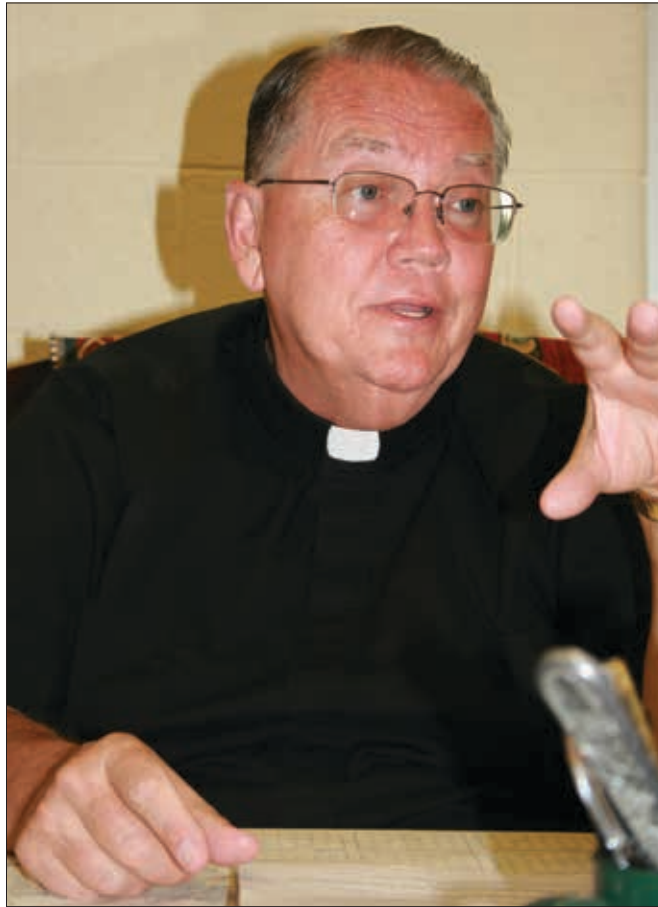
He says this thinking is at the base of [Marist founder] Fr. Colin’s desire that all in our school and others like it become Christian people, upright citizens and academic scholars. “In that order,” Olszamowski says, with emphasis.

INTEGRATING FAITH WITH SCHOOLING

The Catholic Catechism and the National Catechetical Directory for Catechesis state that each catechetical program, such as those found in Catholic schools, must include three things: the teaching of Catholic doctrine, the celebration of sacraments, and Christian service. These are based on the ancient practice of the church, which creates community, right praise or prayer, and right moral practice and service.

“All three of those programs are solidly established in our own Catholic school context at Notre Dame,” Olszamowski said. “We have an outstanding program aimed at understanding the faith as presented by our American bishops, and we have a very fine liturgical practice in place.

“I would hazard a guess that anyone who attends an NDPMA all-school liturgy gets an immediate and strong sense of a school at prayer. Plus, we have a very robust campus ministry program, with four employees offering retreats, service-project



Notre Dame head of school Fr. Leon Olszamowski says the church has a bright future but that it also is becoming “more user-friendly.”

opportunities, reflections on apostolic works practices and much, much more.”

He said the Marist Fathers oversee all of this as part of a covenant with Detroit’s Archbishop and Notre Dame’s own Board of Trustees.

“As priests and brothers, we were sent here to be light bearers for the Christian Catholic project that NDPMA truly is,” he adds.

IS THE CHURCH CHANGING?

Growing up in the Corpus Christi and St. Joan of Arc parish grade schools and then at Harper Woods Notre Dame for high school, followed by teaching and administration stints at both HWND and NDPMA, Olszamowski has been witness to much change over many years in the Catholic Church.

“I have watched the Catholic Church during my lifetime try to keep balancing three central things: community, prayer, and moral practice,” he said. “Both John Paul II and Benedict XVI stressed community and doctrine, and Francis stresses moral practice when he says, ‘The church is not a fortress

for the strong but a field hospital for the weak.’ I think that sounds a lot like Jesus, who said, ‘I have come not to those who are well, but to those who are sick.’”

OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE

Going forward, Olszamowski said the church has a bright future, and that it also is becoming “more user-friendly.”

He said Pope Francis has started a good trend by trying to be less judgmental and working with people where they are in their personal journey. “That, by the way, was a favorite theme of Fr. Colin and the early Marists,” Olszamowski added. “Give people hope and joy for life with or without the law.”

THE NEXT 50 YEARS?

So what will Catholic education in the U.S. look like in 50 years or beyond? Will Catholic schools in the U.S. have to adapt to this changing world to even survive? While acknowledging that the questions are good ones, Olszamowski says we must look to history first.

“Right out of the gate, the Catholic faith has had to live in a somewhat hostile world,” he said. “Secularism feeds on relativism, but Christianity does not. Everyone wants it his or her way, and that is not the way to build humanity.”

Olszamowski said the recent response to the Supreme Court’s decision on single-sex marriage is a good point to reflect on.

“The Supreme Court interprets the constitution through its own moral lens,” he said. “So does the church. But the church, given all of its past problems dealing with the real world, has nonetheless kept true to its understanding of what God wants for humanity.”

He said that Catholic schools, too, will surely have to adapt to a changing world.

“Being Catholic does not mean breathing different air. It’s how you breathe the air that makes all the difference in the world. God created the world to be good—he could do no other thing—the problems in our world are of our own making.”

And, he stresses, Notre Dame will continue to preach Jesus: “who He was and what He wants from the faithful.

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A 'welcome' home for the youngest students

Notre Dame teacher says making the 'little ones' feel loved and supported a big part of her job.



Charged with teaching Notre Dame's youngest students, junior-kindergarten instructor Kelly Bicknell says she works really hard at making her classroom welcoming and accessible.

"The most important part of my job is welcoming each student into my classroom with loving arms," said Bicknell. "Allowing each three or four year old to develop in an environment where they truly feel loved and supported is very important to me.

She said since her students come to her at such a young age, she really wants them to feel like her classroom is an extension of their own homes.

NOT FAR FROM HOME

Home for Bicknell now is Auburn Hills, very close to the Notre Dame campus, and she grew up not that much farther away, in Rochester Hills. The youngest of mom Brenda and dad Scott's two daughters, Bicknell graduated from Rochester High School and went on to Central Michigan University where she earned a bachelor's

degree in early childhood development. She hired in at Notre Dame right after graduating from college in 2007 and after a few years teaching in the classroom, earned a master's in early childhood education from Oakland University.

But even before she got to CMU, Bicknell had an inkling that she wanted to work with young kids.

"I grew up going to a public school and had especially wonderful memories of elementary school," she said. "I had not had much experience with private schools, though, but the second I stepped onto Notre Dame's lower division, I knew it was a special place. The school community and students made me feel very welcomed."

INNOVATIVE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE

Like the rest of the students at Notre Dame, Bicknell's "jr.K-ers" have access to one of the most innovative school curriculums in the world. The International

Baccalaureate program is taught at Notre Dame to students as young as 3 years old, such as those in Bicknell's classroom, to seniors in high school. In particular, the IB-Primary Years Program, taught exclusively at Notre Dame's lower division, focuses on the early development of the whole child as an inquirer, both in the classroom and in the world outside.

For Bicknell, though, she says with such young children in her classroom, it really is tricky to find the right balance between getting them to a certain point in their learning development and providing both an interesting and fun-filled environment.

"At this age, you really cannot push a child's development too much," she said. "But you can provide an environment that promotes learning in a fun and safe way. I love watching my students learn things such as how to spell their names and also

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Portraits created by former Notre Dame IB art students are received in Ghana

Special hand-drawn portraits created by eight NDP Class of 2015 graduates as part of the worldwide program known as The Memory Project were delivered recently to orphans in the West African country of Ghana.

According to Notre Dame's art chair Sandy LewAllen, the eight former students worked on the drawings as their final art project before finishing up their Notre Dame careers. She said during the previous school year, NDP students sent portraits to Haiti children as part of the same program.

The Memory Project is a unique initiative in which art students create portraits for children and teens around the world who have been neglected, orphaned, or disadvantaged. Given that kids in such situations tend to have few personal keepsakes, project organizers aim to provide them with special memories that capture a piece of their childhood – portable pieces of their personal history. As much as possible, the Memory Project also wants to help the kids see themselves as “works of art.”

LewAllen said that Tommy Aeillo, Bella Bucchi, Allie Isabell, Claire and Emily Marquette, Reagan Kazyak, Maddie Meek and Brennan Eagle—all former IB students at Notre Dame—participated in the program. 🌍



Notre Dame IB Diploma success rate for 2015 surpasses last year



International Baccalaureate Diploma Program candidates were celebrated on April 16 in a ceremony held in the Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy media center.

Notre Dame Preparatory School announced in early July that 92% of those enrolled in the school's International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (DP) had successfully received an IB Diploma. This number is ahead of last year's IB-Diploma Program graduation result of 85%.

International Baccalaureate has not yet released 2015 worldwide and U.S. averages, but in 2014, the worldwide average was 78% and the U.S. average was 70%.

Also, Notre Dame DP students in 2015 averaged a 30 score for all components of the diploma examination, which surpasses the worldwide average of 29.8.

Kim Anderson, who is an IB Diploma program coordinator at NDPMA and chair of the modern language department, noted that in the past five years, Notre Dame has not had any student in its IB Diploma program fail the Theory of Knowledge course or the extended essay, two very critical components of the program. 🌍

New capital improvements

Work was recently completed on a number of capital improvements totaling more than \$750,000 and approved by the school's Board of Trustees in April.

One of the biggest projects approved was the installation of new synthetic turf on the William Kozyra Alumni Field. According to school officials, 50% of the cost of the new field has been donated by current trustee William Kozyra, with the rest of the cost coming out of an appropriation from the school's maintenance fund. The new turf features greater concussion prevention versus the current field surface, an alternating-shade-of-green design and colorful renditions of the school's athletic logos.

Also at the April meeting, the board approved the expansion of the intersection of Giddings Road and Walton Boulevard. New left-hand turn traffic signals and left-hand/right-hand turn lanes are installed on both the north and south sides of the intersection to better accommodate traffic during the heavily congested times of the school day.

Administration officials said the school financed the intersection reconstruction with the help of an 80/20 matching safety grant from the State of Michigan through the City of Pontiac.

Additionally, the advancement department received new office space and the restrooms in the gymnasium triangle were renovated. 🌍



Mylenek is three-time All-American

Notre Dame senior Nathan Mylenek earned three All-American designations in one week after finishing second on August 5 in the steeplechase (6:21.58) at the 2015 AAU Junior Olympics Games, which were held through August 8 in and around Norfolk, Virginia. It was only his second steeplechase race ever.

On the day before, Mylenek finished strong in the 1500-meter race, taking second place out of a field of 60 with a time of 4:07 and earning his second All-American designation of the week. His string of All-American performances began August 2 as part of the USATF National Junior Olympic Track & Field Championships in Jacksonville, Florida, where he ran a personal-best time in the 1500 of 4:02, finishing seventh and getting his first All-American honor of the week.

Mylenek won a state championship for the Irish in the spring of 2014 when he finished first in the 3200 at the MHSAA D-2 finals with a time of 9:37. 🌍



CARLY, from page 2

president of the Spanish NHS and president of NDP's varsity club. She makes sure she gives NDP props for getting her where she is today in and out of the classroom.

"My experience at Notre Dame prepared me well for college," she said. "Learning the importance of being well rounded has allowed me to continue my involvement in a diverse array of activities including undergraduate research and athletics. And the time-management skills I gained at Notre Dame were critical in making a smooth transition into university-level academic and extracurricular commitments. Finally, I believe that Notre Dame helped me develop leadership skills that have served me extremely well from the moment I set foot on campus at Tech. In my first year, I became a leader at our outdoor adventure program, a leader of our career fair, and co-founded a new engineering enterprise team."

SPORTS INJURIES LEAD TO CAREER PURSUIT

Joseph's initial interest in biomedical engineering stemmed directly from the various injuries she had while growing up playing competitive softball and snowboarding.



Notre Dame alum Carly Joseph ('13) in her graduation photo.

"I spent a lot of time in doctors' offices, getting MRIs, and having follow-up assessments, etc.," she said. "One of the orthopedic surgeons I visited noticed I had a genuine interest in understanding the science behind my injury and recovery outcome. So he offered to help me get a tour of the biomedical engineering lab that he used."

That experience, plus always asking questions to doctors and biomedical engineers during her early years at NDP, inspired her to pursue biomedical engineering at Michigan Tech, she said.



Joseph is photographed rock-climbing during a recent stay in Chile.

BONDING AND COMMUNITY

Now two years out of high school, Joseph still savors her time at Notre Dame. "My favorite memories from NDP are bonding with my teammates on cross country and softball, as well as attending and leading Kairos retreats," she said. "Also, I can't thank Sra. Tessada and Sra. Anderson enough for being excellent Spanish teachers. They paved the way for me to have a great foundation in Spanish that has been so important to me, especially while living in South America."

She also misses the community aspect of her Notre Dame experience. "It's something that I didn't quite realize how special it was until I left. It is truly incredible the support and encouragement that everyone at NDP gave me during my years there, and it continues to pay dividends to this day," she said.

"I really would like to see future generations of students have a great experience at NDP as well. They definitely will be the next leaders at their universities and in the world." 🇺🇸

New coaches named at Notre Dame

The athletic department of Notre Dame announced in late July that Rob Suffredini has been named head coach of the school's boys soccer team. In addition, Andy Guest, who is Notre Dame's executive vice president and director of advancement, will take over head coaching duties for the boys and girls cross country teams.



Notre Dame boys soccer coach Rob Suffredini

Suffredini, a Notre Dame High School alum, Class of 1986, comes to NDPMA after serving as coach of the Vardar Soccer Club's boys U13-U16 and girls U11-U14 teams. He also has previous experience as a coach and player development director with Michigan Burn, Gators and Carpathia soccer clubs. His high school coaching

experience includes positions with Fraser, Lamphere, De La Salle and Cranbrook Kingswood schools. Suffredini, who replaces former boys soccer head coach Ryan Elchuk, is a graduate of Adrian College where he earned a BS in business administration.



Notre Dame boys and girls cross country coach Andy Guest

Guest has been a mainstay on the Notre Dame campus since hiring on in 2005 as director of advancement, overseeing fundraising, marketing and alumni relations for the school. Prior to taking over as head coach of cross country, he served as assistant coach for boys and girls cross country, and boys and girls track and field. He will continue to assist track and field head coach Jonathan Barbee when that season begins in the spring. Guest is a graduate of the University of Michigan and a 1984 alumnus of Notre Dame High School. 🇺🇸

Notre Dame's annual fund tops half a million dollars for first time

Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy announced in July that it had raised a record \$550,000 in gifts for its 2015 Notre Dame Fund campaign, which began July 1, 2014, and wrapped up on June 30.

The fund total, which is comprised of gifts from nearly 1,000 alumni, parents, faculty and other friends of the school, represents a 17% increase over 2014 and is the highest amount in school history.

The Notre Dame Fund also gained 50 new members in the St. Peter Chanel Society, which is comprised of those who have provided annual gifts ranging from \$1,000 to more than \$35,000. The St. Peter Chanel Society is named for Peter Chanel, a Marist priest, missionary and martyr who lived and served in the 19th century and was canonized in 1954.

Head of school Fr. Leon Olszamowski, s.m., said he was very pleased with the results. "Our annual fundraising team, led by Gregory Simon and Andy Guest, has done a great job surpassing the goal we set by more than \$50,000. Hooray for all of us at the Prep and Academy! We're on a roll, so it's 'onward to victory!'"

Simon noted that the total number of gifts from alumni set a record with a 17% increase over last year's number, which itself was substantially higher than during any previous annual fund at NDPMA.

Nada and Mark Mukhtar, who are current school parents, said giving to The Notre Dame Fund is a great way to help NDPMA prepare their own children and others for successful careers and for life.

"The school has given our children a chance to nurture their talents and grow into young, confident adults," Nada Mukhtar said. "We truly feel comfortable that Notre Dame is preparing them for the next phase of their lives. We love Notre Dame not only because it is rooted in our Christian faith, but also because it celebrates all student accomplishments, whether they be academic, athletic or a particular special talent."

Mukhtar, who has a son in the 10th grade and another in 12th, added that she and her husband donate to Notre Dame "to help further promote its students collectively and individually."



Unrestricted gifts to The Notre Dame Fund give the school the flexibility to address needs as they arise and are among the most impactful for its students.

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sharing in their excitement when they write it down on paper for the first time.

Bicknell also said social and emotional development is extremely important for these very young students and she loves helping to shape them into "mission-driven human beings."

Diana Atkins, the principal of Notre Dame's lower division says Bicknell has a great understanding of child development

milestones. "Kelly utilizes this knowledge to ensure students are not only thriving socially, but also academically," said Atkins. "Spending one to two years at such an early age in her class helps students chart a greater path for success during the rest of their Notre Dame careers and beyond."

Now heading into her ninth year at Notre Dame, Bicknell is just as excited about her upcoming class of junior kindergartners as she was when she first got to the school, which at the time was located in Waterford. Since then, she's witnessed a lot of positive changes to Notre Dame, with the introduction of International Baccalaureate among those near the top of her list.

But she says the new lower-division facility also was a big deal. "The move from the old building to this new beautiful building was one of the most significant changes to our school since I started working here."



Notre Dame junior-kindergarten teacher Kelly Bicknell, second from left, is with mom, Brenda, dad, Scott, and sister, Amy Heeringa, at the blessing of the new lower division classroom building in 2013.

So the "new beautiful building" is now home for the lower division and—if Bicknell has anything to do with it—it's also going to feel just like home for her upcoming class of young Notre Damers.





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LEADING LIGHT, from page 5

“We proclaim Jesus as God’s manifestation in our world,” Olszamowski said. “I am personally of good cheer when I teach my International Baccalaureate Theory of Knowledge class. Our kids are genuinely good people trying to make their way through life as best as they can. I also believe that they have a powerful spiritual dimension to them. I see that very often by the questions they ask in class. They are genuine seekers. Our job here, and it certainly is not easy, is to help them see that the word of God as spoken through Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.”

NOT FEARFUL

Olszamowski thinks Notre Dame is well-positioned and well-prepared for whatever the future holds for Catholic education.

“I am not fearful of the future because I am a solid believer in Christianity,” he said. “I am often frustrated with Christian exercise of the good news but never frustrated with God’s plan in Jesus. We have some very, very hearty believers among the Marists!” He says the Marist’s primary role is to share the joy of the Gospel for a world that needs it more than ever.

“And Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy is a great place to share that joy,” Olszamowski added.

“Ours is truly a miracle school, as Cardinal Maida often said. Mary, the Mother of God, is hard at work to make us thrive in a sometimes hostile world.”

Olszamowski also said that the International Baccalaureate provides a perfect framework to build Christian persons, upright citizens and academic scholars.

“I would expect no less from our great combination of IB with a traditional Jesuit-oriented set of programs that includes the old quadrivium— arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy— and its educational preliminaries.” 