

Parents of St. Mary School and
Parishioners of St. Mary Catholic Church

Re: Introduction of New Principal Deacon D.M. "Doc" Mills, Ed.D.

It is with a deeply joyful heart that I introduce myself as your next Principal. As a resident of Mt. Vernon, it is a profound honor to step into leadership at St. Mary School as we usher in over 70 years of dedicated service to Mt. Vernon and the greater Jefferson County community. I know that leadership changes can bring uncertainty, and I want to assure you that you are gaining a partner with a deep, proven foundation in school leadership. I bring to St. Mary School three decades of public service, including a quarter century in education serving as both a district superintendent and a school principal. This journey is backed by a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and graduation from the inaugural Illinois School for Advanced Leadership, giving me a tested and vested, deeply rooted understanding of how to build thriving school communities. Together, we stand on the shoulders of the visionary parish community that formed this school back in 1955, and I am fully committed to honoring that legacy.

As ordained clergy in the Diocese of Belleville, I will approach my responsibilities as more of a vocation than a job. A deacon's role in the Church is fundamentally to be a servant leader outside of the church and in the parish community. I fulfill this external ministry by volunteering as a Chaplain at the Big Muddy River Correctional Center, providing word and communion services. Additionally, I serve Catholic Scouting America, with over 40-years of service to the Scouting Movement, as Advisor to the Scholarship Committee and spend summers at Philmont Scout Ranch as a member of the Catholic Chaplaincy Corps at Saint George Chapel. This same spirit of dedicated, community-facing service is what I bring to our school family.

My vision for our journey together is anchored in a thoughtful, sustainable timeline. In our first year, my primary focus will be on a working dialogue of listening and learning from you—our parents, parishioners, faculty, and students. In the second year, we will utilize those shared insights to facilitate a comprehensive strategic plan. In years three through five, we will put that plan into decisive action and produce tangible results. My intention is to serve this beloved parish community for the next decade before eventually retiring from my career as a public servant to dedicate my time totally to ministry as a permanent deacon.

I do not claim to have all of the answers right now, but I pledge to dedicate my time, talent, and treasure to finding solutions that live up to the high expectations set for our school since its founding. To achieve this, I look at my role not as a solo performer, but simply as a conductor of Benjamin Britten's immortal *"Young Person's Guide to the Symphony."* My mandate is to bring every section of our beautiful orchestra together: our woodwinds (our dedicated Faculty-Staff), our brass (the Education Advisory Council and the Athletic Association), our strings (the Home and School Association), and our percussion (the Legacy Fund). Only when we are all playing on the same page and

measure of the musical score can we truly ensure a strong return on investment in Catholic education for the student body of St. Mary School.

We are entirely in this together, thus we will walk together and problem solve together. Continuous, open dialogue is essential for the growth, safety, and spiritual development of our children. I look forward to meeting each of you, hearing your stories, and working hand-in-hand to provide a premier, Christ-centered 21st-century education that positions our children for success moving forward.

Be well, do good work and keep in touch... may peace be with you.

Deo Volente,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Michael Mills". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Deacon D.M. "Doc" Mills, Ed.D.
Principal, St. Mary School