

New Era Opens at Pontiac Notre Dame

by Mike Kelly, NDPMA

Notre Dame's new \$7.5 million science, art, and technology wing opens with a blessing and ribbon-cutting

More than 350 were on hand on August 17 when Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy (NDPMA) hosted a special blessing and ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially open its stunning new science, art, and technology wing. Dignitaries at the event included school board members, Atlanta Auxiliary Bishop Joel Konzen, SM, who conducted the blessing ceremony, and Pontiac, Michigan Mayor Dr. Deirdre Waterman.

Waterman, who was delighted to attend, said, "It is a privilege to have this premier institution of learning right here in the City of Pontiac. I congratulate all those who made the effort to make this beautiful facility a reality."

The ceremony opened with an address by NDPMA Head of School Andy Guest, who thanked those responsible for the hard work that went into completing the new wing for the opening of the fall semester. He also thanked the many benefactors who donated to the March On To Victory (MOTV) campaign that made the wing possible, including Bill Kozyra, alum parent, school trustee, former board chair, and honorary chair of the MOTV capital campaign, who was present at the event.

"It's an exciting day for the school and I wanted to be here today to see this wonderful academic addition come to fruition," Kozyra said as he toured the new building. "It's been a vision of Fr. Leon's (Olszamowski, SM) for decades and I'm glad he is seeing it come to life today. The education that our young people will experience now ...is such an important part of their futures. ... I look forward to a lot of future professional scientists, engineers, artists, etc., coming from this wonderful facility."

Arts and sciences

The new facility, which totals about 26,000 square feet, includes a one-story science, technology, and arts wing that has been added to the shared middle and upper division building. The building houses science laboratories, collaborative learning classrooms, a robotics lab, a specially designed greenhouse, and a fine arts studio.

The new fine arts studio, dedicated primarily to the visual arts, has been designed to encourage and foster the talent and imagination of Notre Dame students. Natural lighting, abundant work and storage space, proper worktables, and a kiln room are some of the components that will help the aspiring young student-artists flourish. The space also includes a modern gallery to exhibit students' artwork.

The design and functionality of the new science labs promote inquiry-based learning. Work areas in the labs will accommodate small group collaboration and technology will be incorporated into the teacher demonstration station. A prep



room situated between each of the two science labs provides a safe and secure environment for storing equipment and chemicals in the new wing. The new wing will not only be used for science and art classes, but classrooms here will also be used for some history classes. Evan Wells, a junior at Notre Dame, is looking forward to attending class in the new space. He said, "I think the new wing ...invites conversation and encourages communication between students and teachers, which is a good thing."

Old school, new school

A number of attendees at the blessing had a special appreciation for the continued growth of Notre Dame and its Marist roots. After touring the new wing, Jim Berch, a 1959 alum and former teacher of Notre Dame in Harper Woods, said, "The word that comes to mind is 'fantastic'... I talked with a couple of students here earlier and one, in fact, is going to have four classes in this new wing. I told them to make sure they take advantage of all this."

Another former teacher, Ken Parent, now retired from Harper Woods Notre Dame and Pontiac Notre Dame Prep, was also present at the ceremony.

"I took a quick tour in June while the building was in construction, ...but now it looks even better than the concept sketches" said Parent.

Another key component of the academic expansion is a 1,200 square-foot robotics lab and 850 square-foot adjoining classroom.

"Notre Dame's robotics program has grown to encompass world-ranked programs at its lower, middle, and upper divisions," said Fr. Leon Olszamowski, SM, corporate president of NDPMA. "This new robotics center complements the



Left: Marist Bishop Konzen blessing the new building
Top: Attendees at the blessing of the new building
Right: Marist Bishop Konzen, Paul Frechette, SM, Leon Olszamowski, SM, and other attendees cutting the ribbon for the new building.

space currently provided through our relationship with FIAT Chrysler, a sponsor of our robotics program since its inception.”

Fr. Olszamowski also explained that the robotics room provides indoor and outdoor space for learning, training, construction, and storage. Mobile work stations allow for both computer-aided instruction and robot-building space.

‘Blown away’

Fr. Stanley Ulman is a school trustee and pastor of St. Mary of the Hills Parish in Rochester Hills, Michigan and heads up the Pontiac Area Vicariate. After attending the opening ceremony and touring the new facilities, he was impressed not only with the robotics lab, but especially with the greenhouse and science labs.

“It’s truly amazing,” he said. “I’ve been seeing the sketches and architectural drawings, but this is the first time I’m in here and I’m blown away. What an opportunity for the kids. I believe the kids will want to do even better because they’ve been given such wonderful tools.”

Many teachers also commented on how much they appreciate teaching at a school with such innovative facilities.

Daniel Staniszewski, a math teacher at NDP and alum (2002), was effusive.

“Absolutely fantastic! Gorgeous,” he said. “They’ve done such a great job fitting all the pieces together.”

Kyle Lilek, who teaches English and the International Baccalaureate Theory of Knowledge class, said the new wing was beautiful.

“On top of it all, it’s got exactly what teachers need to do their jobs well,” he said.



Programming plus

Katrina Palushaj, who teaches computer science at NDPMA, is looking forward to her new classroom.

“I think it’s one of the best facilities I’ve seen for students and teachers,” she said. “We can now collaborate as teachers and students in one facility. ...we’ve got four 3D [printing] machines now in my class to allow for even more printing. We’ll also be teaching AP Computer Science this year, a new class, so we’ll be getting more into programming. The kids are going to be amazed when they see this.”

What those “kids” will experience going forward was not lost by Pontiac mayor Waterman.

“It’s a beautiful setting, a wonderful school and it’s a real privilege for your students to receive such an education at Notre Dame,” she said. “And I’m excited about the education this new building will bring for those students who have the honor to attend school here.”

A Reflection Across Cultural Boundaries

Jack Ridout, Marist Vocation Director Interviews Marist Postulant Nik Rodewald

In light of your going to the International Novitiate, how did your experiences at Brownsville, and the parish of St. Anthony of Padua (Greenville, South Carolina) cement your intentions of entering religious life? Do you feel there is a difference in this work as a future religious as opposed to the same work as a committed layperson?

Most of my time in formation has been spent in school, and school can make it difficult to always remember why I came here. Over the summer, I had a chance to spend some time at St. Anthony of Padua, an inner-city parish in Greenville, South Carolina, and at San Felipe de Jesús in Brownsville, Texas. My time at these two sites gave me a chance to re-discover the sense of mission and outreach to those on the margins that originally drew me to the Marist Society.

In Greenville, I worked at a summer-school camp along with a few parish interns, and it was a challenging experience. I remember helping one young man with his math assignment, and he would not even look at me, let alone talk to me or let me help him. We sat in silence for much of our time, until he would run across a problem that he couldn't solve, at which time he read the problem aloud, which was my cue to try and help. It was a really uncomfortable situation, but it made me remember why I wanted to serve as a religious in the first

place. I've always felt that the best thing we can offer to another is our presence, especially in situations where distrust may have developed that prevents us from being able to offer tangible aid.

In Brownsville, I had the great pleasure of spending a few weeks with Tony O'Connor, SM, at San Felipe de Jesús parish. During my weeks there, I assisted with their youth camp, Sembrando Alegría, with the parish music ministry, and with the outreach to the migrant youth at Casa Padre, a center where unaccompanied and separated children are kept while their immigration situations are sorted out. With the migrant kids, I led them in a music workshop. Music workshops with boys lends itself to a focus on rhythm (as boys' voices change during puberty, they are often shy about singing, particularly among their peers). Therefore, I taught them different clapping rhythms that could be combined to form Cuban dance beats. We ended with a competition to determine who had the best rhythm of the group. Overall, much of this work "accomplished" relatively little – it didn't help these kids with their immigration situation, it didn't provide deep spiritual formation, nor did it help them learn English or gain the skills needed for their life in the United States. It did, however, brighten their day for 30 minutes, and showed them that somebody cares.

Obviously, both lay people and religious can do this type of work. As other articles in this issue make clear, the heart of religious life is the spiritual life, and one's total dependence upon God that is lived through the life of the vows. This spiritual life naturally unfolds into mission, and the life of celibacy often gives religious greater freedom to be able to go to the margins. Even so, the heart of apostolic work is the love of God; to paraphrase our Superior General, we don't go to the margins to travel or to see different places, we go because we wish to scour the earth for those people that the world (and sometimes the Church) ignores, and then we decide that these are the people to whom we will give our very selves in love.

How has the time spent prior to the novitiate "pushed" you as a person, e.g., language immersion, your various ministry outreaches, including Brownsville and the parish and your studying subjects other than music?

Several years ago, when I began to take my faith seriously, I remember going to the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky and seeing the words "God Alone" inscribed over the gate. Those words terrified me, and in many ways still do, but my pre-novitiate formation has forced me to confront the reality of that phrase time and again. In 2016, I was blessed to have three months of language and cultural immersion in Mexico, despite not knowing more than a couple words before departing. The time was wonderful – full of joy, growth, and friendship – but it was also a challenge; I had to leave what was comfortable to me, trusting that God would work things out. Likewise, ministry always places us in situations where we're uncomfortable, or where we don't feel "prepared." I experienced this most at the DC Jail. For multiple reasons, jail ministry is unpredictable. I was asked to lead communion services, to preach, and to navigate conflicts between inmates and guards, all in Spanish, and with virtually no preparation. This is how ministry works, and it again teaches me to rely on "God Alone." I think often of what our early missionaries to Oceania – many of whom were no older than I am now – were asked to do: go to places where no non-natives had ever set foot, with no knowledge of language, no way to contact their homeland, no medical facilities, and preach the Gospel! If that doesn't teach someone how to rely on God and not our own selves, I can't imagine what would. Preparing for novitiate, I know I'm going to be "pushed" again to a place of discomfort, where I have to rely on "God Alone" ... such is the great blessing of religious life.

On November 18, 2018 Nik will be entering the Marist Novitiate in the Philippines. We ask for your continued prayers as he continues his journey as a Marist.



Father Colin Program at Sophia Academy

by Bill Rowland, SM

In 1999 the Sophia Academy was founded in Atlanta as a Marist sponsored Catholic school serving children with learning differences.

In January 2017 the Sophia Academy merged with Notre Dame Academy, another Catholic and Marist sponsored school. Founded in 2005, by the current Head of School, Ms. Debra Orr, Notre Dame Academy is an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School located in Duluth, Georgia. Notre Dame Academy has four levels: Early Years (Pre-K2 through kindergarten), Lower School (grades 1-5), Middle School (grades 6-8), and Upper School (grades 9 through 12). Its first senior class will graduate in Spring 2019.

The Sophia Academy is now called The Father Colin Program. The new name pays homage to the founder of the Society of Mary, Father Jean-Claude Colin, SM (1790-1875). When announcing the merger, Fr. John Harhager, SM, then president of Marist School in Atlanta, Chairman of the Sophia Academy Board of Trustees, and Board member at Notre Dame Academy, said, "The Father Colin School will embrace the unique gifts of children with learning differences and will embody the spirit of the mission of the Society of Mary, which strives to be humble, loving, compassionate, open, inclusive and merciful."

The Father Colin Program is a research-based, specialized learning program for students in reading, writing, math, and social skills. Lessons are held in small group settings to help students with learning difficulties to make progress toward their learning goals. Speech-language services are offered through a licensed speech and language pathologist for students that qualify. A reading specialist is also on staff to assist with reading instruction.

This makes Notre Dame Academy Atlanta's only Independent Catholic institution serving children of all learning abilities in grades preschool through high school. The Father Colin Program students now enjoy the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities alongside their peers at Notre Dame Academy. This provides the best of both worlds for students with learning differences while serving all families under one roof.

The impact of the Father Colin Program is best demonstrated through the comment by a parent whose child has learning differences: "We never considered putting her in a Catholic School because we didn't think it would offer a special program." However, when the parent learned from Ms. Elizabeth Bourneuf, the Director of the Father Colin Program, that there was a spot available for her daughter, she wrote the following: "I cried on our drive back home. We love our daughter and want the best for her. She's so smart and she will do great things, but we want her to know about the Lord and to put him above all things."

It is not a coincidence that this mother found refuge in a school sponsored by the Society of Mary, named after the mother of Jesus, to whom this mother fled for her protection, implored her help, and was not left unaided.



Elizabeth Bourneuf, Director

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From Scripture to papal documents to poetry to pop culture references – the “All About Mary” website of the Marianists at the University of Dayton is true to its name. “This website is the largest and most comprehensive site about Mother Mary,” says Marianist Father Johann Roten, SM, director of research, art and special projects for the Marian Library / International Marian Research Institute. “It is a wonderful way for people around the world to learn more about her.”

The University of Dayton’s Marian Library recently launched the “All About Mary” website - an updated version of the Mary Page, a site that was initiated two decades ago by Father Roten. The website puts centuries of information about the world’s most famous mother at anyone’s fingertips. The intent was to make the site accessible to anyone with an interest in Mary - a graduate student researching a thesis, a priest looking for text to support a homily, a catechist completing a homework assignment, or someone who simply wants to know why marigolds are named after Mary.

Checkout the website (<https://udayton.edu/imri/mary>) for :

- Biblical references to Mary
- Devotions, meditations, and liturgical celebrations
- Miracles and apparitions
- Artistic portrayals of Mary
- Mary in film –from “Lord of the Rings” to “Pinocchio”
- Shrines and Churches associated with Mary in the USA and worldwide
- Information on Mary in popular culture, including Marian symbols in “Buffy the Vampire Slayer”
- Why a parrot is sometimes depicted in artistic works of Mary

Are you or someone you know interested in discerning a call to priesthood or brotherhood?

See contact information below.
No commitment necessary.

Are you a Marist?

“In all things let us look to Mary, let us imitate her life at Nazareth... Let us unite silence and prayer with action. The Society of Mary desires that we, her children, should be missionaries of action and missionaries of prayer.” Fr. Jean Claude Colin, SM, Founder

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