

Welcome to the first edition of the Guerin Catholic Parent-to-Parent Newsletter!

“With credit to the SGB, Catholic Life Committee, Parent Guild, and our strategic planning process last year, the Holy Spirit echoed that there is a need for Guerin Catholic to do more to assist parents.”

The origins of this idea span nearly a decade. It started with some of the early parents of Guerin Catholic putting together the Parent-to-Parent Pledge, which is found on GC Gateway under “Parent Guild.” Many parents have told me how much they appreciate that previous parents have shared this wisdom with them and have asked for more. With credit to the SGB, Catholic Life Committee, Parent Guild, and our strategic planning process last year, the Holy Spirit echoed that there is a need for Guerin Catholic to do more to assist parents.

That then begs the question, “Should a Catholic school focus efforts on supporting parents?” The answer starts with a foundation of Catholic education the recognition of parents as the primary educators of their children. This belief is refined by the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on Christian Education:

Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized

as the primary and principal educators. This role in education is so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied where it is lacking. Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and man, in which the well-rounded personal and social education of children is fostered. Hence the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs. (Gravissimum Educationis, #3)

If that is our belief then we as a Catholic school bear a responsibility via the parent-school partnership to offer support and assist parents as they raise their children. One of the tools that I find most valuable as a parent is simply to find other parents who appear to be doing something right with their kids and ask them their secrets. Their answers usually start with an eye roll and an admission that they made plenty of mistakes along the way. They also typically speak of people who influenced them in their formation as parents. It is this passing on of wisdom that I hope to cultivate in this newsletter.

In this first edition we feature two articles. The first article is a beautiful story of a father who left a legacy of prayer to his children, written by Director of Communications Colleen Ward. The second is a humbling witness about navigating pressure from your teens to attend parties and some advice for prom week from veteran GC parent Shelly Thieme. The two articles go well together as good parenting can probably be summed up by using our best judgment and constantly praying for our kids. Future editions are yet to be determined, but some topics of interest that have come up in brainstorming are navigating technology, social media, athletics, encouraging good study habits and helping teenagers deal with stress. A consistent theme will be helping parents to encourage teenagers in their love for Christ.

Parenting teenagers is a difficult job. As the old adage goes, kids do not come with an instruction manual. In some small way, I hope this newsletter provokes thought and reflection into raising teenagers to fully recognize and become the people God created them to be.

Mr. James McNeany

Principal and Father of Noah '20, Evan '22, Adam '25, Mary '27 and Colin '32

NEXT ISSUE: AUGUST 2019
Do you have a story idea for a future newsletter?

Please e-mail Shelly Thieme at shellythieme@yahoo.com with your idea!

The Rosary

By: Colleen Ward

*Director of Communications and
Mother of Jimmy'18, Mary Kate'20,
Christian'21 and Gracie'24*

Four years ago, we said goodbye to our beloved Dad, James J. Creamer. In the days prior, when we knew death was imminent, I was blessed to have many hours of one-on-one time with Dad. I was struggling mightily coming to terms with losing him and I found myself trying to soak up every bit of his presence.

I remember trying to gently nudge him to provide bits of wisdom or advice, but as he was in life, he remained a man of few words. A degree in mechanical engineering from Notre Dame, a tried and true Marine Corp veteran, happily married for over 55 years, father to six children, and grandfather of 16—but he rarely offered advice, rather, he led us all by example.

Dad prayed the rosary every day. As an executive for General Motors, he switched cars out about once a month. He had different cars all the time—but the one consistency was getting into one of Dad's cars and seeing a leather eyeglass case. It didn't contain glasses, it held his rosary. The black rosary was one his Boston-bred parents gave to him on their first, and only trip to Notre Dame in 1950 for his graduation.

It wasn't until I was in high school that I asked Dad what he does on his 30 minute commute to and from work every day. Without hesitation, he said, "I pray the rosary." I queried further saying, "Well what do you do on the way home?" He replied, "I pray the rosary." Stunned silence, I believe, was my response.

Fast forward 10 years later to 1998. Marc and I were engaged and we were heading to the Easter Vigil to welcome Marc into the Catholic Church. The whole Creamer family gathered for dinner and everyone brought some great gifts for Marc. My dad handed Marc his gift and it was a rosary—a black rosary. I asked Dad if he purchased that on our recent trip to Italy and, choked up, he responded, "No. That's the rosary my parents gave to me when I graduated from Notre Dame. I want Marc to have it." Again, stunned silence.

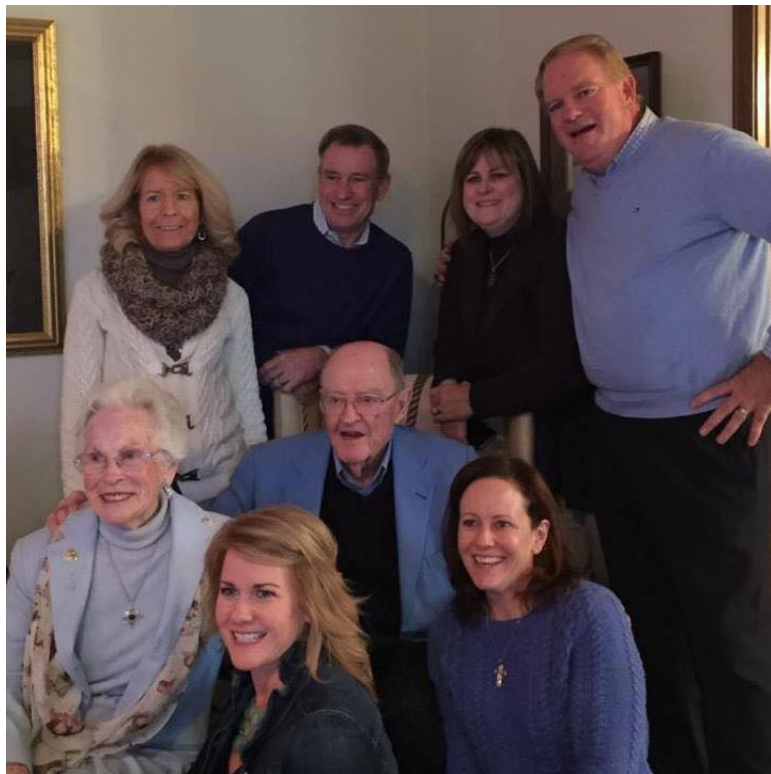
Fast forward to 2015. It was the day before he died, he was very weak at this point and only taking water from a tiny sponge on a stick. I was sitting by his bedside for just one more story, one more piece of wisdom, one more twinkle from those beautiful Irish eyes. The priest from St. Luke's had just visited and mom was walking him out to his car while I stayed back with Dad. I was arranging the sponges and the water next to his medication and not even looking at dad when I heard him say, "Pray the rosary." I quickly turned toward him and place his rosary that was sitting next to his hip in his hands saying "Here Dad. It's right here. I'm putting the rosary in your hands." He was silent for about another minute and I was watching him and wondering if I should start praying aloud. Then he added, "Every day." Yet again, stunned silence. It took me another couple minutes, but then it hit me—that was it!! That was Dad's dying message to me—"Pray the Rosary Every Day!"



At Dad's funeral I was sitting next to my sister Mary Ann Creamer and I shared that story with her. The next week, in the mail from Mary Ann I received a beautiful baby-blue, handmade rosary with my kids initials in the beads. Sweet Mary Ann died three months later and I was praying that rosary at her bedside when she took her last breath.

Every day since March 27, 2015, I have set my alarm 15 minutes earlier and I have prayed the rosary. It's life-changing. If you long for peace in your life in all circumstances, I encourage you to pray the rosary. It was the best advice I've ever been given and I can't imagine starting a day without it. Also, it keeps me connected, every day, with my dad and my sister.

What a blessing. What a gift. Pray the Rosary Every Day!



The Creamer Family Sitting from left Shirley, Christine, Jim and Catherine; Standing from left: Mary Ann, Jim, Colleen and John

Partying, Prom, Parenting . . .

By: Shelly Thieme

*Mother of Nick '16,
Drew '18 and Zach '23*

When our oldest son, Nick, was a freshman at Guerin Catholic, he struggled at the start of his freshman year to fit in. Like a lot of 15-year-old boys, he was just unsure of himself and not quite adept with connecting and finding his niche in a larger environment full of new faces. When October rolled around, his Dad and I were not terribly thrilled with his decision to attend a party at the home of a classmate instead of going to the GC Homecoming events. Both his Dad and I felt it was a poor choice, but we allowed it.



The Thieme Family From left Nick '16, Tom, Shelly, Drew '18 and Zach '23

When the evening of the event arrived, I dropped Nick and three boys (who had been friends since grade school) at the party. I told them to call or text if they wanted me to come pick them up before the agreed upon time. As I drove home, past the crowd of kids heading into GC for the Homecoming dance, I still felt ill at ease, but I figured I needed to let Nick have some space to make some decisions on his own. He was in high school now, after all!

About 20 minutes after I dropped them off, my phone began to buzz. "Mom. Please come and get us. We are waiting outside for you." Suffice it to say, the party was a little more than the boys had bargained for. Alcohol was freely flowing, and based on the wide eyes of the group, it was obvious they had gotten themselves into a very uncomfortable situation. Their clear attempt to be part of the "cool kids" crowd left them all a little rattled.

Poor Nick. We made all our most egregious parenting flubs on the first child! What were we thinking? At age 15, what kids need parents to do is guide them, set firm rules and help them avoid situations that we can foresee because our brains have fully developed and theirs have not.

We made several parenting mistakes that night, and we learned from them. Chief among our errors was allowing our son to attend the party without first speaking to the parents of the host child. We had met them before and "they seemed like nice people". Let me tell you something I know now that I didn't apparently know with confidence then. **Nice people do stupid things.** We should have called!

Hindsight is 20/20 of course and our son, who is now a college junior, would agree that we should have simply told him "no party". Lots of his new classmates were across the street **at a chaperoned** dance, having fun in a safe environment. We're the parents and we didn't act like it that day.

We live and learn. Certainly, this experience and others helped us in our quest to form our sons into respectful and faithful young men as our two oldest sons matured and wanted to do things like drive a car and **go to the prom!** Our first two sons, Nick and Drew, are now in college. Sadly, that seems to qualify us in the minds of others as "experienced" parents these days. Please note my liberal use of the word "experienced" as a synonym for "old".

With **prom season** approaching this spring for the fantastic and joy-filled young people at Guerin Catholic, and with six years of high school parenting in our rear view mirror, I was asked by a friend and parent of a first time prom goer for some advice on how to navigate the chaos. She wants her son to have a memorable night filled with laughs, and she wants him to come home to her safe and at peace in body, mind and spirit. I consulted a couple of other "experienced" parents before we chatted. I humbly submit to you here the advice we collectively offered her at Panera after morning Mass a few weeks ago. I hope some of you find this helpful.

Also, for what it's worth, we've hosted two pre-prom dinners at our home to date, and aside from the smiling faces and gorgeous clothing, my favorite part was listening to spectacular and faith-filled young people pray together before those meals. Prom Night is a terrific opportunity to celebrate the blessing and grace of the joy that it is to be part of a truly special community that is Guerin Catholic.

Don't forget to enjoy this time with your kids!!



Guerin Catholic

2019 Prom

Saturday, April 27

Chatham Hills

PARENTING TIPS—PROM VERSION

1. **Practice civility but be the adult.** Whatever it is that makes you uncomfortable when your child brings it up, trust your instincts. **Everyone is not doing it.**
2. You have the **right to know** exactly where your son/daughter is for the duration of the evening.
3. Do the right thing even if yours is the only dissenting vote. **Co-Ed sleepovers are not appropriate**, and the same goes for unsupervised after prom parties.
4. **Be a problem solver and not a fault finder.** Contact the parents hosting any after prom activities your child may attend—ask the hard questions about alcohol, chaperones, and the like!
5. **Meet your child's prom date in advance.**
6. **Pre-prom meals at your home** or the home of another child attending the prom can be **economical, fun, delicious and safe!** They are also a great way to get to know other parents and children.
7. **Stay engaged.** Talk to your child about your expectations regarding sexual activity and the use of drugs and alcohol.
8. If you have sons—if your young man brought the young lady to the prom, she and her parents have the reasonable expectation that he will take her home from the event. Make sure your son understands that **keeping his date safe is not old-fashioned.** It is part of being a man.
9. **Play the hero.** Don't be the parent that gets upset if the kids are up most the night. As long as there are appropriate chaperones, remember, It's just one night. If you are the after-prom location and can't sleep because of teenager noise, get up and make them pancakes at 4am! They will love you!
10. **Insist on taking too many pictures.** Then, text the best ones to the kids. They'll forgive you for being obnoxious and the images of their smiling faces will begin to pop up all over their social media.



**FIND THE PARENT-TO-PARENT
PLEDGE ON GC GATEWAY UNDER
“PARENT GUILD”**

