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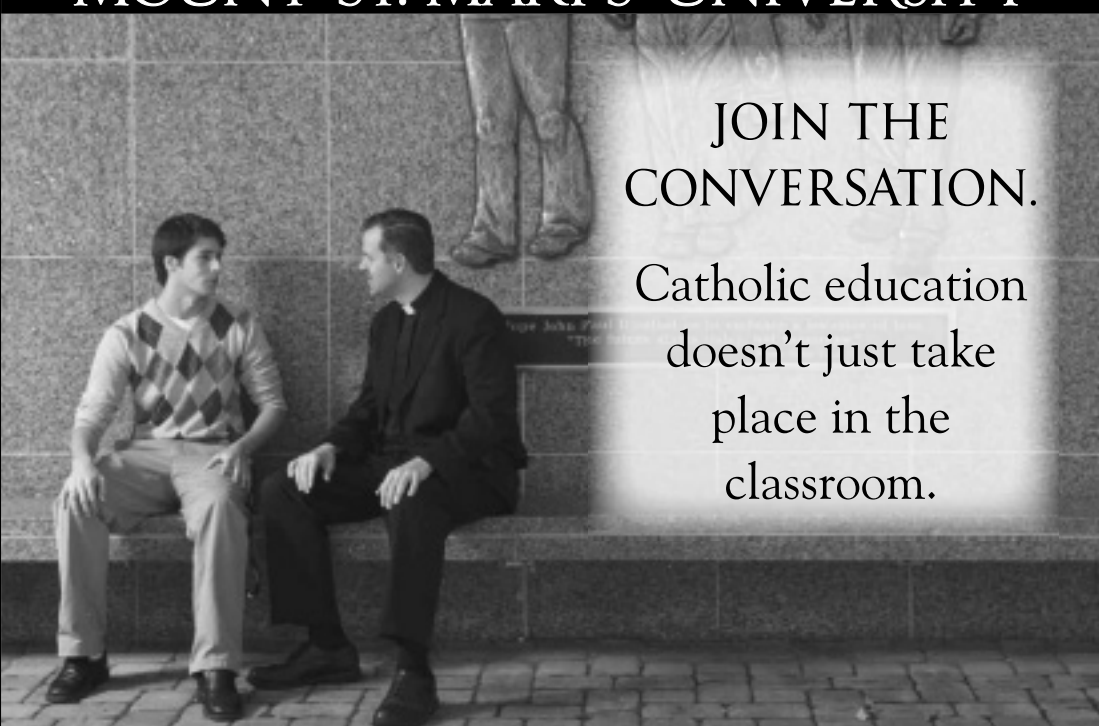



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# Our Lady of Fatima School welcomes pupils from St. Paul's

By Joseph Ryan  
 Dialog Editor

When Our Lady of Fatima School in New Castle started classes Aug. 24, it welcomed 48 new students who attended St. Paul's School in Wilmington last year.

The students were invited to Fatima after St. Paul's was closed in June, following years of declining enrollment and the loss of annual funding from the Catholic Diocese Foundation; \$47 million of the foundation's assets were included in the diocese's \$77.4 million settlement with survivors of sexual abuse by priests.

"We are very much looking forward to the diversity that St. Paul's family will bring to Our Lady of Fatima," said Kathleen Kenney, principal of the New Castle school. St. Paul's primarily served children from Wilmington's Latino community.

"We've always been a diverse community and we will be continuing that richness of diversity," Kenney said. "I think it's going to be a marvelous year of working with the children."

Kenney said the school is providing bus transportation for 16 of the students from St. Paul's. "We made the commitment right off; we were going to offer the bus," she said. Although officials had hoped at least 20 students would take the bus from St. Paul's, "We got 16," Kenney said. It's important that St. Paul parents, who are sharing in the cost of the bus, know there is a way for their children to get to Fatima, the principal added. Donors have also been generous supporting the transportation, she said.

Our Lady of Fatima encourages parents of St. Paul Parish students to stop by anytime they want, Kenney said. "We have an open-door policy. We've helped them with uniform issues; that's been

going on all summer."

Fatima's Home and School Association has developed a mentoring program in which current school parents are assigned to three or four families of children from St. Paul's Parish and other new school families to work throughout the school year.

Last week Our Lady of Fatima teachers spent in-service days learning about Latino culture and ways to work with the new families. Fatima's teachers were also trained in the "Nurtured Heart" approach to discipline, which stresses "positive reinforcement of the child's greatness," Kenney said.



*The Dialog/Don Blake*  
**Former St. Paul student Paul Rodriguez (right) and Emily Gray recite the Pledge of Allegiance during homeroom at Our Lady of Fatima School.**

Also, Our Lady of Fatima will also offer Reading Assist, a volunteer non-profit program that was available at St. Paul's School. The program will continue at Fatima for students who need help and support with reading issues.

"We will meet the children's educational needs," Kenney said.

**'We've always been a diverse community and we will be continuing that richness of diversity.'**

**— Kathleen Kenney, principal, Our Lady of Fatima School**

The principal also credited Our Lady of Fatima's Pastor Father John J. Mink for encouraging a partnership agreement with St. Paul's Parish.

Despite the added students from St. Paul's, Kenney said Our Lady of Fatima's enrollment, 261 pupils, is slightly less than last year's. The faculty of 20 teaches pre-K through eighth-grade, in single classes with the exception of 40 students in two sixth-grade classrooms.

Kenney, principal at Fatima for 26 years, has been at the school for 37 years.

"It's more than just a job; it's my vocation. It's my ministry," Kenney said. A lifelong member of St. John the Beloved Parish in Wilmington, the principal said she's been blessed to be involved at both parishes. "It's allowed my faith to grow. God has been very good to me."

The next issue of The Dialog will be Sept. 15.