

St. John's School's Vision of Education:
An Educational Plan to Empower our Students to become Saints

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Background and Purpose

During the 2020-21 school year, a team of staff and parents gathered to draft a strategic plan for St. John's school. The team quickly realized that they could not create an effective strategic plan without SJS first articulating its vision. This vision would serve as a summary of why SJS exists and the ultimate end SJS envisions for its students and families. This vision would guide subsequent development of a strategic plan detailing how SJS will pursue those ends. Finally, this vision would anchor assessment of the school's conduct and progress towards its ultimate purpose and values.

Following three years of prayer, discernment, research, drafting, and engagement with stakeholders, the SJS administration is proud to present A Vision of Catholic Education. Below you will find a Mission Statement, Philosophy, School Motto, and explanation of the Mission Statement. As we complete SJS's 100th year, the SJS administration looks forward to working with all stakeholders to use this vision as the foundation for a new strategic plan and continued service to the Southern Maryland community – for the next 100 years and beyond.

The Unique Vocation of a Catholic School

Addressing a group of American bishops, St John Paul II declared:

“the greatest contribution that Catholic education can make to American culture is to restore to that culture the conviction that human beings can know the truth of things, and in grasping that truth, can know their duties to God, to themselves, and to their neighbors...The contemporary world urgently needs the service of educational institutions that uphold and teach that truth is ‘that fundamental value without which freedom, justice, and human dignity are extinguished.’”

SJS's vision embraces this vocation and, along with St. John Paul II, views faith and reason as “two wings by which the human soul rises to contemplation of truth.” SJS intends to offer the gifts of truth, faith, and reason to its students and, through them, to the wider culture. Through these gifts, SJS offers its students the opportunity to live a fully human life – one that reaches its natural perfection in this life and its supernatural perfection in eternal life.



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Mission Statement

St. John's School invigorates learning, develops academic excellence, and fosters community by empowering our students with knowledge to understand that their life is a cooperation with the mission of Jesus.

Vision (Just a placeholder until we create one)

St. John's School educates students to witness the unity of faith and knowledge so they will become community leaders and, one day, great saints.

Latin motto

Accordare cum Jesu

"In Accord with Jesus"



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Explanation of the Mission Statement

In order to better clarify the mission statement, that its intent is fully preserved, brief summaries of the mission's key words are explained below. For each word, an initial paragraph defines the word from the mission statement. Following is a second paragraph that gives the Christo-centric context and use of that word.

Empower

Empowerment is being given the authority and ability to influence the world. The greatest way to influence the world is to witness to Christ, which God, through Scripture, gives us the strength to do. Confirmation is the supreme granting of this authority to witness to Christ. Fittingly, Confirmation is the culmination of a student's empowerment at SJS.

Empowerment is a deliberate action performed by teachers, parents, volunteers, and the parish. These relationships provide students with strength. Through this strength they are able to set and achieve goals in harmony with God's will. God's will for our students is to witness to Christ by imitating Him. In imitating Christ, students become Christ in the world, for "Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good, Yours are the hands, with which He blesses all the world" (St. Teresa of Avila).

Knowledge

Knowledge is familiarity with a thing or person that is acquired through experience. To truly know something, rather than merely know about it, one must have meaningful contact with it. This contact leads to recognizing and receiving what is good, true and beautiful, of that thing.

The passing on of knowledge is education. Education requires an introduction to the world. SJS introduces her students to the truth of mathematics and history, the beauty of the arts and sciences, and the goodness of human language and literature. A student ought to respond to knowledge with wonder. SJS desires that this wonder permeate the ordinary, daily life of her students—a wonder of the good, true, and beautiful which took on flesh in Jesus.¹ Although all subjects point to Christ, theology offers the most direct study of Jesus.

Cooperation

¹ Einstein stated - "He who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead; his eyes are closed"



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Cooperation is working together in order to achieve a common goal. History demonstrates that people working together leads to communal flourishing, as Scripture reads, "if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy" (1 Cor 12:26b). A key element of this flourishing is developing relationships; working together is one of the quickest ways for people to develop deep bonds. And yet, as history also shows, it is critical to ensure that this working together toward a common goal truly benefits all.

Jesus being born into the world demonstrates God's radical solidarity with all of humanity. This begins His mission to save humanity from her tendency toward selfishness and sin that ultimately leads to death; He seeks to reclaim and renew the joy of human life. SJS shows her students how this mission is unfolding within their own life. This insight allows students to recognize the mission of Jesus at play in the world and provides them the freedom to contribute to it according to their own unique gifts and talents that He has given them.²

Explanation of the School Motto

Accordare cum Jesu comes from a translation of the mission statement. The student's "life is a cooperation with... Jesus." Cooperation has been retranslated from its original "conviventiam" to the synonym, "accordare." Thus the motto of St. John's School translates to "In accord with Jesus." *Accordare* literally means to have a heart to heart relationship—the word itself contains the word "cor", meaning heart. One that is living, loving, and intimate. A heart to heart relationship implies a close bond between two, an inseparable intimacy. Just as St. Therese describes, "I hide myself in your Sacred Heart, Jesus." It is in His heart that we find joy, hope, satisfaction, fortitude. Thus the motto captures the living, active relationship with Jesus for which we are called to strive.

² "We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully." Romans 12:6-8