



Mount St. Dominic ACADEMY

Empowering Young Women Since 1892

3 Ryerson Avenue • Caldwell • NJ 07006

T: 973-226-0660 • F: 973-226-2693 • msdacademy.org

July 1, 2021

Dear Friends and Members of the MSDA Community,

What a privilege and honor to write to you as the Interim Head of School for Mount St. Dominic Academy.

From my first interview, to the onsite visit, to my appointment and follow-up conversations, the warmth, the love of the Mount, the moving spirit of community manifested through the students, faculty and staff, and the dynamic mission imbued with the charisms of Saint Dominic and the Dominican Sisters of Caldwell have all inspired me to accept this appointment with gratitude and humility. I am thankful for the opportunity to continue my life service to Catholic Education through the Mission of Mount St. Dominic. I am a firm believer in single sex education, having taught all girls, all boys and in co-educational schools from the elementary to secondary levels and administered on the college level.

I am humbled to follow in the footsteps and receive inspiration from the women religious, the Dominican Sisters, who have led this institution and community for 129 years. I stand in awe of the service of Sr. Fran Sullivan who for 23 years has provided leadership and vision as Head of School, and who has encouraged me and supported me in the early stage of this leadership transition. I am excited to share my experience, talents and gifts with the MSDA community so that together we can chart a trajectory of success for the future generations of women who will be educated in faith with the best academic, spiritual, social, emotional, artistic, and physical programs of development so that these young women will be empowered to challenge and lead us into the future.

This is a wonderful opportunity for me to “give back” to the women, especially the women religious who inspired me, challenged me, and charged me to see the world from a different perspective. The opportunities and challenges facing the Mount today are similar to the opportunities and challenges facing other Catholic schools, including the three high schools where I previously served as leader. I will put to work for the Mount my experience and past successes while maintaining faithfulness to the mission and foundational charisms. We must also continue to develop a school that values diversity, equity and inclusion as an integral part of our mission and curriculum. Our society is demanding this and MSDA is beginning to lead the way.

The successes I mentioned were not achieved solely by me, but by the teams I worked with, and I look forward to working with the Sisters, members of the board of trustees, and the faculty and staff to build teams that will secure the future of the Mount as the premier Catholic secondary school for all girls and young women in Essex County.

The summer promises to be a very busy time as I will be meeting individually with all faculty, staff, trustees, alumnae leaders and major supporters of the school. I will also be meeting with the Caldwell University administrators to learn how we can be collaborative partners in the mission of Catholic education. I welcome and need their input to plan for the future for this is not my school, it is OUR school. I welcome the opportunity to meet students and parents who will be on campus during the summer and look forward to inviting parents to town hall meetings to solicit your input on our future, and build on what I have learned of the many hopes and dreams that students and faculty have for our school.

We will be building on the legacy of faith and success given to us by the faculty, staff, students, parents and Dominican Sisters who have gone before us and whose spirit will motivate us to embrace and create a dynamic future. Please pray for me as I work to serve this great community, and I will certainly pray that Saint Dominic and all the Dominican Saints will bless our efforts.

Sincerely,

James (Jay) MacDonald

Interim Head of School