



VOLUME V ISSUE XVII

November 17, 2023

There is Much to be Grateful For

As we approach the Thanksgiving Holiday, and we gather around the table with loved ones, please take a moment to offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the growth of John Paul II Catholic School. It was only four years ago, in the Fall of 2019, when our school was mired in an extended period of stagnated growth and saddled with an operational deficit of slightly under \$1,000,000. While things may have looked mighty bleak at the time, through the power of prayer and perseverance, the little Catholic school that could began to grow, and grow it did. In the last four years the school's enrollment has increased by 74%, making it the fastest growing school in the Diocese of Charleston, which just so happens to be the fastest growing Catholic school system in the country in the past decade at 7%. In fact, the next closest diocese had a 4% growth rate, and that one did it with state vouchers. This is truly a remarkable story. With the projection of an enrollment at more than 400 students for the 2024-25 school year, not only will JP II be at capacity, but we will have completely eliminated the operating deficit, inclusive of debt, in just five years. We will no longer require a subsidy from the diocese to operate and will be financially viable for the foreseeable future.

Many ask how we did it? While it's a simple question, the answer is complex, involving a series of circumstances that seemed to align all at once. The disruption caused by the pandemic and subsequent growth of the area definitely helped, however, and more importantly, the steady improvement of the quality of our program has opened the door to students transferring from other private and public schools. JP II has earned the reputation as a rigorous academic institution. Our feeder schools continue to grow and the number of students continuing their Catholic education at JP II has increased. Students are coming from Hilton Head in record numbers when they rarely came before. A significant increase in scholarships thanks to Mr. Al Urbano, the Daughter's of Charity, and thirteen promise scholarship donors, has made the school more accessible to those with limited financial resources. Our athletic, fine and performing arts, and extracurriculars have continued to outperform the small enrollment size. We offer the most sports of any private school in our area, providing the opportunity to participate for those who wish to, and over 80% of our students do so. The choir has grown from 3 students in 2019 to over 30 today, and we have a foundational instrumental music program emerging. Theater is now one of the most sought-after activities and recent productions of *Beauty and the Beast* and *Fiddler on the Roof* have been phenomenal. Not to be outdone, our robotics program is

amongst the best in the region. Our campus, already one of the most beautiful around, continues to improve with the new entrance and enhanced landscaping services. Our marketing, from the high-quality *Light Magazine* to all the admissions events we do, has put JPPI on the map as *the* school of choice. All of the above, and more, are intentional, allowing us to take full advantage of the growth in Beaufort and Jasper County.

The accolades bestowed on our school are an indicator of the quality. Recently named to the AP Honor Roll at the Platinum Level, the highest level a school can achieve, JPPI is now among the top 6% of all high schools, public and private, across the United States and Canada for college readiness. JPPI was also named a Project Lead the Way School of Distinction for both middle and high school. Less than 1% of schools in the US achieved this. Finally, for the second year in a row, JPPI was named the best middle school and high school in the Lowcountry by the readers of the Beaufort Gazette. Our students graduate prepared for college, career and life through solid academic preparation and the intentional commitment to our core values.

While we may have become an “elite” school, meaning one of the best, we are far from “elitist”. Our student body is the most diverse of any Catholic secondary school in South Carolina. With over \$750,000 in financial aid and scholarships offered, we have kept the school affordable to families seeking a Catholic education. Over 20% of our students are on student support plans serviced by the Marian Center for Learning. With no admissions test, JPPI serves all academic levels. Our tuition, when compared to our competitors, is the best value by far, particularly when you apply the \$1,500 Catholic discount.

Growth is not without its challenges. The current school building, constructed for 240 students, is no longer sufficient to meet our needs. Over the past three years we have added modular classrooms to serve as a temporary solution to a longer-range problem. As we approach 2024-25, we will likely be at capacity, creating wait lists in some grades and perhaps slowing our momentum a bit. While plans continue to move forward for the new Innovation Center building, the cost of this new building will challenge us all to find the resources to make it happen.

With that said, it is now time for families to consider re-enrolling at JPPI for the 2024-25 school year. The demand is about to outstrip the available spaces. Our first priority in enrollment is our current students, followed by their siblings, and then our Catholic feeder school students, however re-enrollment must be completed by March 1. Failure to do so by this date will remove the guarantee of enrollment.

On Sunday, at our annual State of the School Address on Facebook, we announced tuition approved by the school’s Advisory Council. The high school tuition will increase to \$16,500. The middle school will be \$14,500. We will continue to offer the \$1,500 Catholic parish discount off these amounts as well as the \$500 sibling discount. The 3% pay-in-full discount will still be offered. The bus fee will remain the same. The primary reasons for the tuition increase is as follows (1) three Marian Center positions funded by a grant will be absorbed into the budget, (2) inflation has impacted our ability to stay competitive with salaries and benefits and cost-of-living in Beaufort County, (3) increased borrowing for Phase I of our Campus Masterplan Project, and (4) the end of the diocesan subsidy which is expected to be \$250,000 this year. You will also notice we have increased the differential between middle and high school tuition from \$1,500 to \$2,000. The reason for this is that the cost of a high school education has become much greater due to the number of course offerings and smaller class sizes.

Ensuring that JPPI remain affordable for all families is our #1 priority as we re-enroll students. The cost of education is what it is. We are neither wasteful with our spending nor excessive with our program. We offer

the program, both curricular and extra-curricular, that our students need for their future and our families demand. Still, contrary to what some may believe, you don't have to be the most expensive to be the best (see the tuition and fees comparison chart below). **Families needing financial assistance must apply no later than January 15 to be considered.** We will do everything we can to meet the need, although we know the need will outpace the funds available.

We are equally thankful for the trust you put in JPPI to educate your child in the Catholic faith and preparing them for college and beyond. I believe there is no better investment you can make. Please join us next year and continue to watch us grow.

Tuition Comparison with Area Private Schools

Below is a chart showing the tuition rates for the 2023-24 school year. As you can see, JPPI compares very favorably to the competition in terms of program offered for the price paid. These rates are published on the respective schools websites and are inclusive of fees where applicable. The rates for JPPI are non-Catholic. When you apply the \$1,500 discount, we are the lowest. (Schools have not announced 24-25 rates)

	High School	Middle School
Hilton Head Prep	\$23,700	\$23,260
Hilton Head Christian	\$17,925	\$17,925
Cross	\$15,550	\$13,250
John Paul II	\$15,350	\$13,850
Beaufort Academy	\$14,440	\$13,440
Holy Trinity	\$13,350	\$13,350
Average	\$16,719	\$15,846

Friendsgiving is Tuesday, November 21

In addition to bringing in sides and desserts for members of our school community to enjoy as we celebrate Friendsgiving on Tuesday, November 21, we are collecting food items for Mercy Mission. The Mercy Mission Food Pantry provides food to over 600 households per month; if we add the members of these households, the total is over 1000 individuals. Meat, bread, and some fresh produce are provided by Second Helpings with a weekly donation of over 3000 pounds of food. St. Gregory the Great, St. Anthony's Mission and other churches and parishes provide bi-monthly canned food and monetary donations. Residents of many of the local communities (Sun City, Margaritaville, Hilton Head Lakes, et. al.) also make periodic donations. What Mercy Mission needs most is canned peas, canned corn, canned black beans, one-pound bags of rice, and 34-ounce jars of spaghetti sauce. How about giving up chips, soda, candy, or a Starbucks or Dunkin' Donuts ONE DAY A WEEK to help supply these staples? Let's work together—students, parents, faculty and staff to surpass our last year's donation of 3000 cans to make sure that our brothers and sisters will have what they need as we enjoy our holiday meals! SERVICE in action is one of our core SHIELD values.

From the Sports Desk

Girls Varsity Basketball opened against Bridges Prep, winning 63-10. This was a total team effort with every girl getting quality minutes and contributing on the stats sheet. Leading the team was Camryn Michael and Brady Mahoney with 18 and 15 points, respectively. Great team defense and patience on offense all night! Next, we play Porter Gaud in the first game of the Battle of the Lowcountry.

Boys Varsity Basketball fell to Bridges Prep 55-53 at home on opening night, but the story of game was a furious 4th quarter comeback that saw the Golden Warriors tie the game at 52-52 after trailing 43-26 after three quarters of play. The comeback was led by the shooting of senior James Keefer, the playmaking of freshman Daniel Godsun, and the hustle and energy of Sebastian Slusne, Christian Tilton, and Sean Phalen. We will carry that momentum Thursday to Charleston as we take on St. John School in the Battle for the Lowcountry.

Have a great weekend.

In His Purpose,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John McCarthy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a heart symbol between the first and last names.

President

