

## St. Anthony High School The Legacy Lives On

**“Whether we will it or not, we cannot journey without leaving footprints,  
and others will follow where we go because we have marked the way.”**

With those words Sister Gabriel of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary opened wide the doors of the only Catholic secondary school in Long Beach in 1920.

Who would have predicted the long legacy of St. Anthony High School back in 1920 when a rudimentary two-story frame building housed a handful of Catholic teenagers and a small faculty seeking an alternative to Long Beach’s public education system. In reality, the story of the St. Anthony High School of 1920 can be traced to a time much earlier, starting with the founding of the parish.

The history of St. Anthony High School becomes a history of Catholicism in Long Beach, which has deep and dedicated roots. Back in 1903, our city’s first Catholic church, seating just 200 congregants, was built under the leadership of Father Ramon Ferrar on the southeast corner of Sixth and Olive (this first church faced Sixth, rather than Olive as does the current church). The Catholic population in Long Beach was small but growing, comprised primarily of Irish, Italian and Mexican immigrants and emigrants from the Midwest and East Coast. Early Long Beach was predominantly Methodist and Congregationalist, so the growing Catholic population was of some concern to a few in the Protestant community. Long Beach was founded as a “dry” town and the appearance of a Catholic parish caused concern over the perception that Catholics would bring with them bars and saloons. In Bishop Montgomery’s cornerstone-laying ceremony for the church in 1902 he was reported in the L.A. Times as addressing this concern with the following: “I understand that some people have said that when a Catholic church was established here there would be a grog shop on every corner, or something to that effect. I hope there will never be one nearer to this church than at present.”

Father James A. Reardon was appointed Pastor after Fr. Ferrar, in 1907. At this point, the humble church was nearly bursting at the seams. He quickly noted the need for not only a new, larger church, but also the need for a parish school to serve the growing population of Catholic children.

The parish school was built in a similar style to the original church. With one large room and two cloak rooms, the three lay teachers and Fr. Reardon assumed educational duties over more students than anticipated. Several ninth grade students were taught at this first facility, making this original school the incubator for what would become St. Anthony High School.

Fr. Reardon’s 1907 school closed its doors in June 1909. The enthusiasm for it was not matched by monetary contributions. At the same time, plans for construction of a new, larger church were underway, diverting attention to that project over the needs of the school. The new church building was completed during the middle ‘teens and the original church was packed onto moving wagons and rollers and carted up to 1851 Cerritos Avenue where it resides today, as Mt. Carmel Cambodian Church.

Once the new church was completed, Fr. Reardon could address the issue of a school once again. This time he asked four Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary to come to Long Beach. They did so in 1916. They taught at the second St. Anthony's school which was dedicated in 1919. It was a single story frame building with six rooms with no halls or cloakrooms. The entry into each room was from the exterior porches, or through connector doors in each classroom.

## 1920's

### THE FIRST ST. ANTHONY HIGH SCHOOL

125 pupils attended school that Fall of 1919. Finally, Fr. Reardon had a real school. By the end of that first school year, four boys and eight girls received their eighth grade diplomas. During the summer of 1920, Fr. Reardon had a second story added to the grade school and this provided the rooms for the first St. Anthony High School. The building was located behind the church, facing Sixth Street (approximately where the gym is now).



**By September 1920, the nucleus of the founding high school students started at St. Anthony's with Sister Gabriel, IHM, as founding Principal.** In 1922, St. Anthony High School received full accreditation from the University of California at Berkeley, entitling graduates to enter any university without examination.

This same year – 1922 – marked a turning point for the parish and school grounds. Fr. Hegarty (the pastor appointed after Fr. Reardon) was concerned with the increasingly crowded southeast corner of Sixth and Olive. The School, the Church, the Sister's convent and playgrounds were all situated on one quarter block. Acquiring more property on this same block looked grim until one of the building and advisory committee members (Joseph Prendergast) traded some flats he owned across the street, deeding them over to the church. This was to be the location of the new school. The Convent was moved across Sixth Street so the sisters could be closer to the new school site and room was made near the church for a new rectory.

Paralleling the growth of the Catholic school population was the population of Long Beach

in general. The discovery of oil on Signal Hill, along with the ease of mobility afforded by the railroads, the Pacific Electric car and the automobile, caused a population boom



throughout the southland. Public schools were bursting at the seams and new Catholic parishes were being planned throughout the city. But St. Anthony was still the first parish in Long Beach and the hub from which all others blossomed.

In late 1926, Fr. Hegarty started his building program, calling for a two and a half story grammar school with a rooftop playground and a basement for club and parish activities located on Olive just north

of Sixth, together with a one-story high school located adjacent to the church. These school buildings were designed by Mr. Franklin Power and constructed by Fred Tucker in the popular Collegiate Gothic style of the day. They were finally dedicated in May 1927 at an outdoor ceremony officiated by Bishop Cantwell attended by 20 priests and 5000 neighbors and friends of St. Anthony.

## 1930's

### THE 1930'S EARTHQUAKE

Fr. Robert E. Lucey succeeded Fr. Hegarty as pastor in 1929. The Long Beach Earthquake of March 10, 1933 focused Fr. Lucey's attention to the physical needs of the parish and school. The two story grammar school (where the high school is located today) had sustained earthquake damage but it could be shored up and reinforced with concrete pillars both inside and out. It was re-dedicated in October, 1929. The high school across the street and next to the church was not so lucky. Although only one-story, a second earthquake on October 2, 1933 brought this building to the point of no return. The Church was also severely damaged.

At the same time, the 1933 earthquake set into motion a building program that would bring St. Anthony High School to its current situation. The Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary continued to teach all grades through high school, using the two-story grammar school building where the high school is located today. Children were crowded into every square inch of the school.



Despite the tight quarters, the Saints launched a tradition of athletic prowess winning their first league championship in football in 1935. The first publication of the yearbook, “The Anthonian”, occurred in 1935. The year 1938 saw the appointment of Monsignor Bernard J. Dolan as Pastor of St. Anthony Church, a place he lovingly and generously served for the next 30 years.

## 1940's

### THE 1940'S – THE HOLY CROSS BROTHERS

Msgr. Dolan, recognizing the burgeoning need for Catholic education, took on the challenge of establishing a separate boys' high school. In April 1941 he purchased additional land on Olive and Seventh Street and in June of that same year the foundation for the boys' building was laid. Around this same time, Msgr. Dolan with Fr. John Cavanaugh, C.S.C. (a visiting Holy Cross Brother from Notre Dame) conceived a plan for the Holy Cross Brothers to lead this boys' school in the west. Msgr. Dolan started the wheels in motion – The Holy Cross Brothers would staff the Boys School – which, according to newspaper accounts at the time, would be known as Central Catholic High School for Boys (This name –Central Catholic – did not last. The school was always referred to at St. Anthony's), and the IHM Sisters would continue to teach the girls. Now, with Msgr. Dolan's building plan in place, there would be separate schools for each.

This 1941 building on Seventh and Olive was designed by M. L. Barker and C. Lawrence Ott. It included a library and science laboratories. That first year over 400 students were enrolled and the new student body moved in around Christmas time, 1941. Once the separate schools were finally established and the faculty was firmly in place, St. Anthony High School took off. A series of “firsts” happened in quick succession.



The first edition of “The Paduan” student newspaper rolled off the presses. The year 1945 saw the inaugural GAA (Girls Athletic Association – Catholic High Schools) Girl's Basketball Tournament held in the Armory which rapidly became the preeminent tournament for girls among all Catholic high schools in Southern California. The girls quickly established themselves winning the first championship.

In 1947 a track of land located at Clark and Del Amo was gifted to the high school for athletics and “Clark Field” became a remote part of the campus hosting athletic teams for both boys and girls. Clark Field continues to serve today as the “Home of the Saints”, and its green fields

have witnessed some of the best of the Saints' athletic prowess, most notably the 1948 CIF Championship Football Team.

The late 1940s began a period of record-setting success in all sports. Football, baseball, volleyball, and track produced not only team championships, but also individual awards that brought national recognition. The year 1948 saw the opening of the Gymnasium known as the "St. Anthony Catholic Center" where to this day the words "Mens Sana in Corpore Sano" (Healthy Minds Healthy Bodies) are emblazoned in the concrete façade over the entrance. Movie producers and television studios have discovered the timeless significance of the storied gym. It has become a much sought-after site by Hollywood for both film and television series, most recently the movie "Coach Carter."

## 1950's

### THE 1950'S – THE GROWING YEARS

The 1950s ushered in a growing awareness of the importance of a Catholic education and morals in an increasingly unstable world. With the Cold War arriving on the heels of World War II, the 248 graduates of the Class of 1958 were cautioned in the commencement ceremony about the dangers of a world filled with atomic weapons and the need for St. Anthony graduates to find ways to help humanity.

In the late 1950s, "Saints Pride" became a matter of record when Fr. James O'Callaghan, along with 1200 alumni founded the Alumni Association. Their work paid off with dividends. Of more than 16,000 graduates, over 9,000 are a permanent part of an ever-expanding alumni database, helping ensure continued connection between graduates throughout the decades. The first of many league championships in track and baseball were won in 1953.



## 1960's

### THE 1960'S – HIGHS AND LOWS

Early in 1960 the St. Anthony High School cafeteria opened at the 6th and Alamos Avenue location. With 1715 students, the 1964-65 school year would be the largest in the school's history and historical as the baby-boomer population expanded SA to the largest Catholic high school enrollment west of Chicago. In 1965 the Watts riots brought racial tension to the forefront throughout the Southland. In 1968, the tireless Msgr. Dolan died, leaving an unparalleled legacy. Msgr. Ernest Gualderon became the new Pastor just as the

implementation of the Second Vatican Council changes were trickling into the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

During this period, the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary – a founding rock of St. Anthony's schools – were torn between implementing the changes established by Vatican II and the conservative approach to the Council advocated by the Cardinal. This struggle between the Sisters and the Archdiocese epitomized the internal struggle many Catholics experienced during the turbulent 1960s. It was truly the end of an era in 1969 when the Sisters departed the school. Their 50 years of selfless dedication to the students and families of SAHS will remain as a foundation to the school forever.



## 1970's

### THE 1970'S – CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

SAHS turned fifty years of age in 1970. In 1971 the Boys' and Girls' Departments joined and officially became one co-educational institution. The changes mandated by Vatican II were beginning to take effect throughout the Church. Msgr. Gualderon invited many congregations of women religious to join the faculty and administration. They included the Franciscan Sisters of Syracuse, Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, Sisters of the Holy Cross, Carmelites, Dominicans and Religious Sisters of Charity.

A further commitment in 1978 led to a better learning environment with the opening of the Educational Development Reading Laboratory in the "A" building, formerly known as the Girls' School. The facility was funded by the SAHS Foundation, instituted by Msgr. Gualderon, and the Social Justice/Peace Funds provided by the Brothers of Holy Cross, South-West Province. The 1970s also saw the Boys Basketball program dominate the league.



## 1980's

### THE 1980'S – THE TRADITION CONTINUES

At the same time the St. Anthony neighborhood became beleaguered by the same problems facing many inner cities and downtowns throughout the nation. The city of Long Beach was experiencing a decline in urban investment, as middle class families sought the relative security of suburban settings. This challenge for the school was met head-on, as throughout



the 1980's St. Anthony continued a tradition of academic and athletic excellence.

The 1982 boys Basketball team played in the CIF Final Four, the boys and girls Track and Cross Country teams enjoyed banner years, girls Volleyball soared to new heights, while Baseball and Football enjoyed championship seasons. Academics made their way into the championship arena with a first place finish in the Long Beach Centennial Academic Bowl in 1988 with a repeat performance in 1989. The SAHS Foundation played a pivotal role once again by providing funds for a computer laboratory along with networking of the administrative computer system.

## 1990's

### THE 1990'S – A DECADE OF CHANGE

The school continued to be blessed throughout the 1990s with a series of championship teams and a further example of the Spirit of the Saints and their traditions. The 1991 Academic Challenge Bowl Trophy made its way to SAHS for the 3rd time in 4 years. In 1991 the Lady Saints Volleyball team capped several years of dominance by bringing home the first ever California State Championship trophy (in any sport). Also that year, the gymnasium facility in the Catholic Center was dedicated the Jack Errion Memorial Gymnasium in memory of Coach Errion's accomplishments (Head Coach 1954-76, 12 Catholic/Angelus League titles). In 1993 Msgr. Gualderon retired after 25 years as Pastor. The cafeteria was soon rededicated in his honor.

Fr. Lawrence Caruso followed Msgr. Gualderon as Pastor and brought a wealth of administrative experience and wisdom to the parish and as well as the high school during a troubled time. The Baseball team earned its first trip to the CIF Finals in 1995, the same year SAHS turned 75. Fr. Caruso died suddenly in 1997 and was succeeded by Fr. Richard Krekelberg who served as Pastor until 2003.

Despite the academic and sports successes of this decade and the leadership and dedication of Fr. Lawrence Caruso, the 1990s brought great challenges for the school as well as for the city. In April 1992, the Rodney King riots spilled over into Long Beach, coinciding with the bursting of the real estate bubble. Despite external hardships, and amidst the economic downturn, St. Anthony continued to reflect the diverse population that had become the heart and soul of the city. While the population grew to nearly a half million residents, St. Anthony continued to offer the only Catholic college preparatory education in the city. Declining vocations, expanding needs in other areas of their ministries, and a changing environment saw the departure of the Holy Cross Brothers and the Franciscan Sisters after 55 and 25 years of service respectively. Continuing economic decline in the surrounding neighborhood led to reduced enrollment and a large percentage of the student body receiving some form of tuition assistance. Many Catholic schools in the Southland were facing consolidation, closure, or a reduction in services. St. Anthony – again – would meet these challenges with clarity and creativity.

## **2000's**

### **THE 2000'S – NEW CENTURY, NEW CHALLENGES**

In 2001, the SAHS Advisory Council commissioned an external study to evaluate the viability of St. Anthony High School as its enrollment was at an all-time low and financially unsustainable. Results of the study established that St. Anthony High School clearly had a place in Long Beach and a tradition, mission and purpose with enduring value for those who desire a first-rate, Catholic college preparatory education.

A team of leaders made up of alumni, parents, faculty, staff, friends, and members of the community at large, led by St. Anthony's first President, Regina (Holden) Rushing Maguire ('67), appointed in January, 2002, took steps to ensure the growth and long-term viability of beloved St. Anthony High School. While some thought this hallowed institution might disappear from the educational landscape of Long Beach, they were mistaken, underestimating the loyalty of the Saints Community, past and present. Several lead gifts provided a turning point for the school, fueling efforts for renewal. Too numerous to name, these supporters signed on for the long haul, committing their time, talent and treasure to restore St. Anthony High School to a position of leadership in Catholic education, this time for the 21st century.

The renaissance story continued throughout the first decade of the 2000s, a decade of challenge and renewal which included a major flood in the school's Administration Building in 2002, resulting in closure of the building for 19 months. But St. Anthony's innovative approach to education and resource development, and its philosophy of "renewal from the inside out", attracted increasing enrollment and greater financial stability. St. Anthony's own student President's Ambassadors aided this process, serving as spokespersons, leading tours and carrying the message of excellence to the community.

St. Anthony High School became an Archdiocesan high school in 2005, transitioning from the traditional parish high school model to management by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles

Department of Catholic Schools. This change provided additional resources and support for the high school and streamlined operations. Supported by a strong consultative Advisory Council, innovative strategies were developed to address immediate needs and prepare for the future. Community awareness and alumni connection expanded, new resources were developed and new business and community partnerships were forged.

In 2005, SAHS was the grateful recipient of significant gifts from the Dan Murphy Foundation, the Caruso Family Foundation and the John and Dorothy Shea Foundation which enabled the 85 year old school to jump-start much needed building renovations and attract even more support. Over the next five years, more than \$6M was invested in programs, facilities improvements and technology, changing the face of the aging campus for the better. In 2010, this renovation was recognized when Long Beach Heritage awarded St. Anthony High School its prestigious “Historic Preservation Award”.



The Marine Science Academy was founded in 2007, providing curriculum in partnership with the Aquarium of the Pacific and attracting top students interested in careers in science. The school’s Band was re-established, thanks to community interest and donations, and in 2008 a new gym floor was installed in the Jack Errion Gymnasium. This floor was named in honor of 1988 alumnus Darrick Martin whose career in the NBA spanned 13 years following graduation from UCLA.

In 2008, St. Anthony welcomed its current Principal, Mike Schabert, whose energy and outreach resulted in significant, sustained increases in enrollment and continued strengthening of SA’s academic and athletic programs. In his role as academic leader of St. Anthony High School, Principal Schabert led the school through its WASC accreditation process in 2010 and SAHS was awarded the highest WASC accreditation for a seven year term.

## **2010 to Present**

### **THE CURRENT DECADE - CONTINUING THE TRADITION**

The 2010 decade is characterized by remarkable strength, innovation and continued growth for St. Anthony High School. Today’s students are 83% Catholic and 17% non-Catholic. They are 34% Caucasian, 31% Hispanic, 13% African American, 11% Filipino, 6% multi-racial, and 5% Asian/Pacific Islander. Students are drawn from 28 communities in the

greater Long Beach area, representing all economic and cultural backgrounds. Keeping our doors open to students in need of financial aid to attend the high school remains a top priority, as alumni and community donations continue to fund scholarships, enabling tuition to remain among the lowest in the Archdiocese.

Academics is at an all-time high as 100% of St. Anthony's graduates go on to college or service in the military. Every graduate meets University of California admission standards, and then some. In 2015, 74% of SA's graduates were admitted to four year universities, with the remainder attending two year community colleges or trade schools. The Class of 2018 garnered over \$10 million in scholarships and financial aid for college in recognition of their superior academic and athletic qualifications, and students participating in Academic Decathlon competitions consistently bring home top awards.

This decade is also a witness to the success of all athletic teams and growing community recognition. Sixty-two percent of the student body participates in a sport. Since 2010, the vast majority of our teams have earned League Championships, competing at the highest levels and going on to compete for CIF Titles. In 2016, 2017 and 2018, SAHS earned CIF Championships in Girls Basketball, Girls Volleyball, Football, Track and Field and Swimming. Head Football Coach Mario Morales and Head Volleyball Coach Alicia Lemau'u were both named "Coach of the Year". In both 2016 and 2017, SAHS was recognized as Long Beach's Most Outstanding Athletic Program, receiving the Long Beach Rotary Club Centennial Trophy. Throughout history and today, the Saints exhibit a strong love of sports and recognize the value of athletics as part of a well-rounded high school experience.

In 2012, St. Anthony reoccupied the "Science Building" on campus, leased for many years to a charter public middle school as enrollment once again began to grow. In 2013, John and Dorothy Shea and the Dan Murphy Foundation joined forces to construct a new kitchen on the first floor of the building. The SA Courtyard Café opened in the Fall of 2013, providing daily food service to students, faculty and staff.

In 2014, the school relocated St. Anthony's Chapel to larger space as it welcomed Fr. Raymond Marquez, the first full-time priest assigned to the school to teach and serve as Chaplain in 20 years. An unused classroom below the Library was renovated to become a little theater - The Black Box Theater - hosting its first student theatrical production in 2014. A Solar Energy System was installed on the roof of the A Building and the Gymnasium, thanks to the Port of Long Beach, and in 2015 the Science Building renovation was completed, setting the stage for the introduction of integrated STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) curriculum that same year.

In 2017, a new Project-Based Learning PC Library was dedicated with engineering software to accommodate the expansion of STEAM curriculum and the addition of more STEAM-related classes, just in time for the opening of the 2017-2018 school year. In this year, St. Anthony High School welcomed the largest enrollment in 20 years - 575 students.

The list of graduates continues to grow and the Spirit of the Saints is alive and well at 620 Olive Avenue as Long Beach's only Catholic high school prepares to celebrate its 100th Anniversary in 2020. .

The closing words of our Alma Mater never rang so true:

**“Through the years we shall renew the glory of thy name!”**