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Dear Parish and School Families

As you are aware, over the last several years our nation has been plagued with an increase in incidents of gun violence in our schools. Although the likelihood of an incident in any school, specifically a small parochial school like St. Raphael, is extraordinarily rare, just one incident is one too many. With this in mind, and with the continued concern and input of both school families and parish families, I along with Mrs. Kathy Bogataj, our School Principal, and Deacon Jim Grevenites, our Business Manager, have spent the last several months developing a strategy to respond to the inquiries and to the needs of the campus.

Over the last two years we have implemented several items that have increased the security of the campus and particularly the school. Last September, after a listening session with several school parents, we again looked at our parish facilities to assess the need for any additional changes we might make to add another layer of security. We consulted with the local police, a private security company, area Catholic school administrators, the Superintendent of Schools, and visited other campuses to have a better idea on what can be done here at St. Raphael.

As a result of our inquiries, we have learned there are some steps we can take to provide an environment that is more secure for the children, parents, and staff. The first was that we have staff training about specific situations, and we improve the means of immediate communication for the teachers. We have done both, and I will commit to providing this type of training and school drills on a regular basis.

The second is the physical security of the campus during times that school children are present. A recent School Survey indicated that although almost 70% of those responding are satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the current security of the school, they would be pleased if something more could be done. Between 40% and 60% indicated their greatest concern is at times when the students are walking on the campus, such as to lunch, restrooms, etc.

In the end, there are two options to reduce the vulnerability (the time it takes for an intruder to reach a student or students), of the school. One is to provide an armed employee or security guard (as the political powers of the State have mandated for all public schools). The second is to create a controlled, single access environment for the school. Our survey showed the same options would be welcomed by our families with an average of 75% to 80% indicating that creating a single access campus or an armed security person would provide for a safer environment.

We have chosen to create a controlled, single access environment. The discussions we have had over the last four months with many different parties, along with Mrs. Bogataj's 30 years of administrative and teaching experience in Catholic elementary schools, and Deacon Jim's 25 years in professional

security management have led us to this decision. Although some may not agree, we are confident that it is the right direction for St. Raphael.

Our campus is broken up, so in order to create a controlled, single access environment it will take at least two major steps. The first is to make the school office more secure and require visitors to be screened and admitted to the office. We will do this with a wall and a resistant glass partition and a buzzer door. Secondly, we will add tall fencing (with gates in appropriate places) to better secure most of the perimeter of the school. This will include decorative fencing added to the classroom hallway, the covered walkway/breezeway between the School Building and School Annex (back of the old church building) and near the Parish Center. By doing this we will be able to restrict access to the school buildings and the Parish Center area. The challenge of this will be that it will eliminate access to the church via the covered walkway during weekdays. Access to the church will be from around the front. Access to the Parish Center will be improved as it will mainly be through the walkway between the Parish Center and Media Center. This work should begin by March.

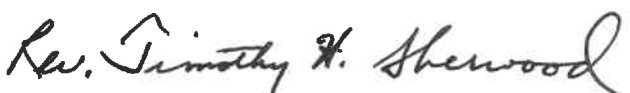
The 2nd step will include some minor remodeling in the School Annex/Parish Hall area. We will be moving the Band Room to the current Parish Hall and then building an inside hallway leading to the covered walkway from the inside. Once this is completed the only way to access any of the School will be through locked gates or the school office entrance.

What about the Parish Hall? We will then remodel the old band room to create a new Parish Hall that will include two restrooms, some storage for regular users and a better designed food counter. We plan to call this new room Msgr. Caverly Hall. It will be about the same size as the current hall with better amenities. This change will also better separate social activities from the School and moves our Parish Hall entrance right to the front of the property.

There is a lot of detailed information in this letter, but I wanted to share all that we are doing so there are no misunderstandings or misconceptions. The preliminary estimates for this project will range up to \$225,000. We anticipate splitting this cost equally between the church and school, however, we will allow the school to take about 5 years to process this expense.

Rationally we know that the probability of death or injury is overwhelmingly greater on the car ride home than in the school yard, but life is life. Yet, if we try to eliminate every worldly risk, we would not be able to go on living, working, going to school, shopping or going on vacation. Please know that these have not been easy discussions or decisions, however I am sure it will do what we intend. It will improve the wellbeing and safety of our students. Psalm 127 reminds us that "Children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward." I thank you for your understanding and I appeal your patience as we move forward through this process. If you have any questions please feel free to discuss this with me, Mrs. Bogataj or Deacon Jim directly.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Reverend Timothy Sherwood, Pastor