New Teachers at the Mission

All the way from the University of Tulsa, Oklahoma and a graduate of Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) program, Eric Harper is one of the excellent teachers at St. Mary's Mission, and one of the newest additions to their team.

Soon to be thirty years old, Eric worked at a school for disadvantaged kids in Memphis, Tennessee until the school unfortunately ran out of funding and was closed. Eric was offered a position at St. Mary’s, and within two weeks of visiting Red Lake, took the position. Eric has been the middle school math and social studies teacher ever since, beginning his second year of teaching at the Mission and eighth year of teaching overall.

“Kids have such a natural curiosity,” Eric said. “Middle school kids are so energetic and weird, but a good weird. They're wild and chaotic and have so much that they want to do and learn. I got here, and I felt that I'd stepped into another world. I didn’t need to be here long to know that this is where God wanted me to be, and that this was where I could really give to the world.”

Ryan is the newest member of St. Mary’s Mission staff, a local with a family calling to service and the Mission. Ryan’s parents were both highly involved in the mission; his father served as principal after his retirement, his mother volunteering there after retiring as a high school teacher. Both education and mission work were in Ryan’s blood. Armed with a Bachelor of Arts in Communications Studies from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln and a Master of Education from Regis University, Colorado. Ryan came back to his roots to spend his first year at St. Mary’s as a religion, social studies, and science middle school teacher.

Ryan spoke about why he felt drawn to St. Mary’s. “It wasn't just my parents, though that definitely was part of it. I felt a pull, and I followed the opportunity God gave me. He gave me this chance to be a light for the school and the reservation. I knew I could improve things here, and that I could do more here, with God’s hand on mine.”

“It’s been a weird first year,” Ryan admitted. “It’s my third-year teaching overall, but with the pandemic, a lot has changed. But what we perceive as problems are just opportunities. It is truly a gift to have Christ in education, every day, and to have His light guiding us through the halls.”

St. Mary's Distance Learning continued

in person. Staff are putting every effort into creating an environment for learning without taking the students away from their home desks and still transporting their minds into the classroom. Hougen also stressed the needs of the individual students and how they are being acknowledged, and that despite all difficulties caused by the pandemic, it has never been easier to speak directly with the parents and discuss issues. St. Mary’s is attempting to return to in-person classes and nearly two thirds of the families have opted back into the classrooms. Each family makes its own best choice for safety and learning. Staff makes accommodations for both present and online students. Physical attendance is optional for the family to choose their comfort level of children attending school again. Shaleigh Beaulieu, returned her daughters to the classroom, saying the girls miss their friends very much, but mostly they miss their teachers!

Articles about the new teachers and distance learning written by Bailey Bradford.
Belonging to God’s marvelous family

Dear Donors—

I have come to realize that the secret of being a good teacher is not that you love teaching, but that you love the kids you are teaching. Our lives are shaped by those who love us. The reason why our kids thrive at the Mission is because they are loved unconditionally, and they belong to a marvelous family!

Our challenge is not just to educate them, but even more so, to keep them alive and help them to live healthy, wholesome lives.

In deepest gratitude and the peace of Christ,

Fr. Jerry Rogers

A Note from Bishop Hoeppner

Dear Friends in Christ—

I write in gratitude for your continued support of St. Mary’s Mission, one of the oldest and most extraordinary Catholic schools within the Diocese of Crookston. We have been so blessed under the leadership of Fr. Jerry Rogers to have expanded our once struggling elementary school to grades pre-k through 8th grade. We have been doubly blessed by an energetic and devoted staff at St. Mary’s that provides what instructor Eric Harper describes as a “rigorous education” coupled with an opportunity for over 100 Ojibwe children to become disciples of Christ.

Your gifts and respect for the people of the Red Lake Nation have made this possible. God bless you all.

In the name of our Lord Jesus,

+Michael J. Hoeppner
Bishop of Crookston

The Bear Spirit of Courage represents bravery and the strength to do the right thing.
The Beaver Spirit of Wisdom represents the gift of each person and how to use our gifts to serve others.
The Eagle Spirit of Love represents the unconditional love of the higher power and the ability to share that love with our fellow people.
The Buffalo Spirit of Respect represents the care that must be taken in every aspect of life, from the land you live on to the creatures that support your life.
The Sasquatch Spirit of Honesty represents the words of the heart, and the ability to be true to your word.
The Wolf Spirit of Humility represents a higher spirit above that we must acknowledge, and to think of others before yourself.
The Turtle Spirit of Truth represents the ability to remember and carry out the teachings of the other spirits and the ability to act on the truth of these elder spirits.