



ST. MICHAEL HIGH SCHOOL
A CHESTERTON ACADEMY

Dear Friends of St. Michael High School,

In our modern world, the prevailing culture is continually changing and – I think we can agree – not always for the positive! Here at St. Michael, we believe as did our parents, our grandparents, and our ancestors of generations-past... *we find our strength in the Lord.*

It follows that we also believe... *it's all about the CULTURE.* It's our *culture* at St. Michael that distinguishes us from the pack, especially from public schools. After all, how can a school push back on cultural toxicity, *while pretending that the very reason for our being doesn't exist?*

At *St. Michael High School, A Chesterton Academy* in Petoskey, Michigan, we're convinced that our Christ-centered approach, which recaptures the Classical model of education, is the antidote to a litany of societal ills. Every day at St. Michael, we serve our students the timeless wisdom of the Catholic Church and the very best of Western Civilization.

We write to you today asking that you join in our crucial mission... *to nurture and elevate a new generation of joyful leaders educated in the classical tradition and the truth of the Catholic faith!*

Many teenagers today are unhappy and isolated – unchallenged by chronically low expectations and unfulfilled by the empty thrills of virtual reality and ever-indulgent pop culture. In accepting our Lord's offer to have life in abundance – and by 'raising the bar', not lowering it – we prepare our students to triumph over the rampant materialism and pervasive despair of our present age.

Our inspirational patron, British author Gilbert Keith Chesterton, a giant among the great Christian apologists of the 20th century, famously wrote: *"A dead thing can go with the stream, but only a living thing can go against it."*

At St. Michael, we swim against the secular tide of moral relativism by teaching God's Truth in all that we do. We don't pretend that Our Lord doesn't exist. Far from it! Rather, we immerse our schoolhouse in prayer, forming students who know their faith and aren't afraid to stand up for it. They'll graduate ready for more than just college, or the trades, or the military, or even a religious vocation. They'll be prepared for a joyful Christian life, wherever the Lord leads them!

We accomplish this through the formation of daily habits which, in turn, builds goodness and virtue in character. Our pursuit of excellence follows Aristotle's admonition that "*excellence is not an act, but a habit.*" This approach permeates the culture of our beloved school – whether in the classroom, on the stage, on the athletic field, or out in the community.

So, just what is it that forms our culture at St. Michael? Here are three key pieces...

First... *we catechize our students so they know their faith.*

Our students live in a world that's often at odds with Christianity, if not openly hostile to it – so they need to know their faith and know it well. We provide the tools and training they need to engage in the arena of ideas with conviction and confidence, as well as humility and charity.

Through catechesis and prayer, we cultivate Christian leadership. Do leaders matter? Human history, from Creation through yesterday, teems with examples of Godly men and women taking leaps of faith and accomplishing the seemingly impossible. Girded with armor both spiritual and intellectual, we prepare students to joyfully lead a new generation toward a *culture of life!*

Second... *our curriculum is intentionally Classical.*

We embrace the integrated Classical model of education, with all subjects pointing to our Creator, coherently presenting the immaculate order of His Creation, bypassing misguided modernist educational trends which do not acknowledge (and often deny) His very existence.

Classical education, as handed down by Catholic scholars for centuries, marks a return to our educational birthright. This doesn't merely mean that we study philosophy, theology, and Latin. We also train students to digest *original texts* and wrestle with ideas of history's greatest thinkers – from the philosophers of antiquity, through the Medieval and Renaissance periods, to our Founding Fathers, into the early-20th century when the Classical model was largely abandoned.

The Classical education movement continues its resurgence, nationwide. Make no mistake... *The future of Catholic education is Classical.*

Third... *we relentlessly seek the Truth.*

As Pope John Paul II famously said, "*Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.*" The best critical thinking comes at the intersection of

Faith and Reason and we meet our students there each and every day. Our students learn to think critically, grounded in the ***Truth, Goodness, and Beauty*** of the Christian worldview.

In our modern world, many advocate for their ‘personal truths’, while rejecting the concept of objective truth. We suffer no such delusions at St. Michael. Our Lord and Savior stated plainly... “*I am The Way, and The Truth, and The Life. No man cometh to the Father but through Me.*” (*John 14:6*). And so, we pursue this Truth with conviction and vigor.

Our school year is off to a fantastic start – thanks be to God!

- We have more new students and new families at St. Michael this year than ever before.
- We’ve strengthened our faculty with new teachers in art, chemistry, and advanced math.
- We’ve reduced overhead expenses while expanding our offerings, including new courses in College Writing, Journalism, Standardized Test Prep, Academic Illustration, Personal Finance, First Aid & CPR, and – our personal favorite – ***Vocation Discernment***.

We’re heartened by the response to the ***Tuition Offset Fund***, established by faithful donors last spring, which provided sufficient funds for us to ***lower our tuition price (by 20-percent)***. This opened the door for many hardworking families to consider a St. Michael education for their students which they’d previously believed to be out of their reach. We remain committed to affordability as we construct a counter-cultural ‘city on a hill’, a beacon of hope to local families.

In addition, our *Classical Enrichment Program for Homeschoolers* has attracted new interest from a wide geographic radius, opening doors to more families joining up with ours. Together, we recognize that parents are the primary educators of their children and we celebrate our unique ability to provide classroom and community experiences that can’t be replicated at home.

Looking ahead, we’re plotting a revival of St. Michael as a hub of intellectual sparring for our adult community through our speaker series. (Stay tuned!) We look forward to a fabulous Christmastide choral performance, as well as a March presentation of Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing*. We’re also planning our Fourth Annual (and best-ever) *Celebration Gala!*

Meanwhile, our Quiz Bowl team continues its tradition of defeating far-larger schools. State-level success for our runners is another familiar story that gets better every season. Social Dance celebrates the chaste formation of ladies and gentlemen, while the Pro-Life Club stands boldly for the Unborn. Our can-do spirit is contagious. We continue to punch above our weight class!

Also, stay tuned for our Strategic Planning ‘kick-off’ in early-2025. Thanks to generous benefactors, we’re working with the nation’s premier full-service Catholic education growth consultancy – *Partners in Mission* – as we aspire to launch St. Michael from ‘persevering start-up’ into Northern Michigan’s preeminent high school, blessed and built to last for generations!

As always, ***there’s so much to do*** – and as an independent school, we receive no federal or state assistance – nor do we receive financial support from the diocese. We rely on our generous donors. St. Michael High School is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, to which all gifts are tax deductible.

To our faithful benefactors, thank you! To those not yet onboard, or for whom it’s perhaps been a while, we humbly ask you to join our St. Michael family – join our team, help us build!

We can’t transform and establish St. Michael without your help. Please consider assisting us with your time, talent, and treasure. Your direct involvement makes a massive difference.

Topping the list is help with ***Enrollment!*** Nothing matches the impact of bringing students to our school. We have significant interest in mid-year enrollment. Do you know of families (including homeschoolers) that may also want to join us at St. Michael? Please let us know!

It currently costs much more than the \$6,000 sticker price for us to educate a student each year (it’s actually north of \$16,000), and many young, working families need financial assistance. Can you bless these families as a ***‘Tuition Angel’***, helping them make their *leap of faith*?

Support of the previously noted ***Tuition Offset Fund*** is another way to support Northern Michigan families, and to help keep St. Michael tuition affordable for everyone.

We’ve never turned a student away for financial reasons. Please help us continue this policy so we can bring *Truth, Goodness, and Beauty* to all families who desire it for their children!

Other important initiatives with which we need your help include...

Teacher Retention, including an Endowed Chair for Science & Mathematics – As the cost of living rises, we must stay competitive in hiring teachers, attracting top talent and rewarding classroom excellence. While Chesterton schools typically excel in the Humanities, we seek equal strength in Science & Math by competing for the more limited pool of mission-ready educators in those fields. Please help us attract and retain the best faculty for our students!

Support Staff for Advancement and Strategic Plan Initiatives – We don't have support staff for Advancement-related functions (i.e., fundraising, communications, events, etc.), and it's apparent not only that such help is needed at St. Michael, but would likely 'pay for itself'. The aforementioned Strategic Planning process, and the initiatives it generates, will make this need even more acute. Please help us right-size our operation for growth and success!

Educational & Technology Upgrades – We need new laptops for online digital science labs, layout and design of our student newspaper, and for our seniors to research their capstone projects. We need to purchase additional textbooks to accommodate our growing student body and we also plan a comprehensive upgrade of our entire science curriculum with new textbooks grounded in Christian teaching.

Physical Schoolhouse Upgrades & Proper Signage – While we're pleased to make our home in a former elementary school, there are minor modifications we must make to the building – both for functionality, and also to better conform to modern building codes. We also need to erect proper signage so that it's on display for all to see – who, what, and where we are!

Is a 'lump sum' year-end donation not desirable or feasible for you this season? How about a more modest **recurring donation** – quarterly, monthly, or however often? It's easy to set that up – as well as one-time donations – via our website at... stmichaelchesterton.org/donate/.

At St. Michael High School, ***it's all about the culture*** – a Christ-centered culture that engages, challenges, and uplifts our students and our community. *We find our strength in the Lord!*

Our momentum is building! Along with our largest-ever influx of new students, there's an unmistakable new energy in our schoolhouse! We invite you to visit and have a cup of coffee with us, or join us for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. If you have teenagers, why not schedule a shadow day? Come on in and see for yourself... ***the joyfully Catholic culture of St. Michael!***

Thanks for your prayers and support. May God bless you and your family this Advent season.

In Christ,



Kevin Weed
Headmaster



Larry Rudnicki
Executive Director



Josh Mercer
Board President