

ST. PAUL CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Faith in Education Since 1867



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Saint Paul Catholic School Celebrates Humble Beginnings and Legacy of Achievements During 145th Anniversary

VALPARAISO, IN, October 9, 2012 –On Friday, September 28 at 1:45 p.m., Saint Paul Catholic School celebrated the kickoff of its 145th anniversary with a cupcake celebration (see attached photographs). For the next 12 months, students and faculty will explore the school’s history and integrate 145 into its activities through service projects and other initiatives.

The story about the school’s origins is quite compelling. Born in 1834 in Westmouth County, Ireland, Michael O’Reilly had a tough childhood. His father died when he was just a boy of seven. At 13, he joined the rebel forces fighting against the Irish government. In 1848, Michael O’Reilly came to America. Living with his uncle in Utica, New York, he worked numerous jobs to save up enough money to pursue his education. He enrolled in Oberlin College, went on to Notre Dame and then attended Saint Mary’s Seminary in Cincinnati where he was ordained. A young priest, he arrived in Valparaiso and found Saint Paul Catholic Church had been closed due to severe financial troubles. Undaunted, he plodded on foot through the snow trying to locate a few Catholics. He rented a hall for two dollars a Sunday to say Mass. But Father O’Reilly had a vision, and he pursued it with passion. He earned the trust of his parishioners and the congregation grew. He purchased an acre of land at [insert original school address] and for just \$8,000 he initiated the building of a school. In 1867, Saint Paul’s Academy and Grammar School opened its doors.

Nuns from Saint Mary’s in Terra Haute taught core academic subjects, as well as music, drawing, painting and fine needlework. According to Julia Carver, whose father, John Carver, was one of the parishioners during this period, “The grammar school was Father O’Reilly’s splendid achievement. He was ever watchful of each pupil.” Under his guidance, the school grew and expanded its offerings to include a choir, band, fife and drum corps, drama club and other extracurricular programs.

Although Father O’Reilly died at sunset on August 4, 1887, his significance endures. The school outgrew the confines of the original acre lot he had purchased, and in 2006, a new school was erected at 1755 Harrison Boulevard featuring 13 state of the art classrooms; computer and science labs; 12,000 book library; art room; cafeteria and gymnasium. Today, Saint Paul Catholic School’s

campus is vibrant with activity, with 42 teachers and faculty dedicated to educating a diverse student body of 346 children.

“Although the address, name, and size of the school have changed dramatically since its founding, Father O’Reilly’s passion for education continues today with a long legacy of success in its wake,” shared Jane Scupham, principal of Saint Paul’s Catholic School.

Building upon the strong educational foundation they received, graduates of Saint Paul Catholic School have gone on to become physicians, teachers, priests, attorneys, entrepreneurs and professionals in a diverse array of fields. SPCS graduates also include a Marine Major and school principal. Mindful of the importance of serving others which was instilled during their formative years at SPCS, graduates also enrich the communities where they live by sharing their time and talents through volunteer and philanthropic endeavors.

Former students are encouraged to share their memories and success stories by contacting Mrs. Scupham at the school or by posting on the school’s Facebook group page titled Saint Paul Catholic School Valpo.

About Saint Paul Catholic School

Celebrating its 145th anniversary, St. Paul Catholic School was founded in 1867 in Valparaiso, Ind. The school has a diverse student body spanning kindergarten through eighth grade. In addition to a rigorous academic curriculum, students are involved in an array of athletic, extracurricular, service and faith-based activities. For more information, please visit www.stpaulvalpo.org.

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