

The Cost of Education at St. Mary's School

Every student at our school is receiving financial aid. Yes, every student from every family. This is so because an education at St. Mary's costs about \$8,750 per pupil per year, and no one is asked to pay that amount. The difference between what any family pays and what our education actually costs – financial aid – is made up by several means, including the constant fundraising efforts of the PTO, the contributions of the annual Golf Classic and Gala, donations from friends and alumni of the school and parish groups like the Knights of Columbus and St. Mary's Women's Club. But the most important source of support for the school comes from St. Mary's Church, without which the school would not exist.

The intrinsic connection between the church and the school is why active parishioners of St. Mary's who regularly attend Sunday Mass at St. Mary's pay a different tuition rate than all other families with children in our school. Those who are coming to Mass at St. Mary's and supporting the parish with their tithe are already supporting the school, which is an apostolate of the parish, and so they have the privilege of paying less per pupil to send their children to our school.

To qualify for the status of active parishioner and the reduced tuition rate afforded to parishioners, each family must be registered in the parish, attending Mass every Sunday and holy day of obligation (travel and serious illness aside), and contributing at a minimum the average weekly gift indicated by the parish, which for 2016-17 is \$35 per week. Attendance at Mass is required and is verified by the use of the parish stewardship envelopes, and eligibility for parishioner tuition is certified before each semester. Please note that parishioners who use Electronic Fund Transfer to make their gifts must still use the stewardship envelopes at every Mass and check the box for EFT in order to verify Mass attendance.

Financial Aid

Direct financial aid is not available to those who are not members of the parish, but four types of financial aid are available to active parishioners of St. Mary's Church:

1. Active parishioners who cannot afford even the parishioner tuition rate for the school are welcome to apply for financial aid, a process that begins with the completion of a financial aid questionnaire at www.factsmgt.com. Applications for financial aid from active parishioners are welcomed each year during the month of February, and the amount awarded to each applicant is determined by the recommendation of FACTS and the total funding available to the parish in each academic year. This year the deadline for filing an application is 19 February 2016, and award decisions will be announced as soon as possible, usually by late March.

2. The school also maintains an emergency aid fund, which is used to assist families who experience a crisis during the school year. In the case of injury, illness or job loss when there is no time to apply for financial aid as described above, please contact the principal to describe the situation. The award of funds is unique to each situation and depends upon the total funding available to the school in each academic year.

3. A third source of funding for financial aid comes from the Diocese of Charleston via the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Scholarship. This scholarship is applied for on behalf of families who have additional calculated financial need after the school financial aid process is completed. Each family that applies for financial aid from the school and has further calculated need after the school award process, will automatically have an application for the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Scholarship completed on their behalf. Please call or email Nelle Palms at 864.679.4117 or nelle.palms@stmarysgvl.org with questions.

4. Finally, in addition to financial aid awarded after completion of a FACTS application, active parishioners with genuine financial need may qualify for a reduction in the minimum weekly offertory gift to the parish without losing the parishioner tuition rate. Anyone in financial need who desires to request a reduction in their average gifts to the church while still remaining eligible for the parishioner tuition rate must meet with the pastor of St. Mary's to review the need and agree to a plan for remaining active in the parish. To arrange this meeting with the pastor, please call 864.679.4101 and ask for an appointment to discuss school enrollment. This may be done at any time during the school year.

Donations for Financial Aid

The funds given in financial aid through the regular annual disbursement of aid and the emergency fund come from the general parish budget and from restricted gifts given for this purpose. Anyone who desires to make more funds available for the benefit of families in need is welcome to make a gift to the church or school for just this purpose. Such gifts are tax deductible and are received with gratitude. It is even possible to make such contributions through VANCO tuition draft, and the amount can be designated when signing up for VANCO at any time. Please note that these donations cannot be accepted on behalf of an individual student because that would simply constitute paying the tuition of a specific student, and tuition payments are not tax deductible. Anyone who desires to pay tuition for a student other than one's own children is welcome to do so, but those funds would be accepted by the school simply as the payment of tuition.