



## Office of the President

November 11, 2020

Dear families, alumnae, Sisters of Mercy, and friends,

Catherine McAuley, the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, wrote, “*It is a special favor of God to be made a teacher.*” God truly favored Jeanne Blakeslee and the Mercy High School community in making Jeanne an exceptional teacher and for the last six years, our remarkable principal. Thus, it is bittersweet to share with you that Jeanne had decided to retire at the conclusion of this academic year. In doing so, Jeanne will be able to pursue with full energy and attention all that brings her joy—a fitting reward for an educator who has brought joy and so much more to Mercy. I invite you to read **Jeanne’s letter** to our community.

Jeanne’s work as principal of our beloved school is her “second act” at Mercy. Beginning at Mercy in 1976 as a teacher, she left in 1998 for new leadership opportunities at St. Paul’s School for Girls. A deep affection for the charism of Catherine McAuley and a whole-hearted dedication to our mission brought Jeanne back to Mercy as principal in 2014. Jeanne’s visionary leadership has energized our academic programming and provided new opportunities for Mercy Girls to learn and laugh, to pray and thrive. These include:

- The authorization of Mercy as an International Baccalaureate World School offering the Middle Year Programme. Today, Mercy stands as the only Catholic girls’ school in the Archdiocese of Baltimore to achieve this prestigious designation.
- The expansion of the *Women in Medicine Program in partnership with Mercy Medical Center* and the establishment of the *Sister Agnese Neumann Scholars Program in partnership with MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital* in response to continuing demand for one-of-a kind STEM opportunities.
- The creation of the *Law and Social Action Program* to provide students interested in law and policy the opportunity to understand how to effect community transformation.
- The evolution of our seminar and advisory programs to include a deeper focus on emotional wellness, healthy relationships, and cultural competency.
- The retention, recruitment and development of an intellectually excellent faculty committed to delivering a rigorous college preparatory education grounded in Catholic, Mercy values to our Mercy Girls.

Jeanne and her team accomplished all of these strategic priorities and more in the midst of a rapid transformation of campus facilities, including installation of a new HVAC system and modern classroom furnishings and 21<sup>st</sup> century technology. Jeanne has continued at this pace in the pandemic, providing steady, thoughtful, and creative leadership in these unprecedented times. And through it all, Jeanne has continued to teach Advanced Placement Psychology because, truth be told, nothing brings Jeanne more joy than to teach, guide, and mentor Mercy Girls as they become the women God intended them to be.


We have been richly blessed by Jeanne's exceptional commitment to Mercy, and as a result, Mercy is strongly positioned to attract our next excellent, dynamic, and faith-filled academic leader. A national search chaired by a distinguished alumna, Tess Veloso '68, is underway, and the position description will be disseminated before the Thanksgiving break. We look forward to engaging a broad cross-section of Mercy students, alumnae, Sisters of Mercy, past and current parents, and friends of Mercy in the search process. In the meantime, should you wish to nominate a candidate, please email [search@mercyhighschool.com](mailto:search@mercyhighschool.com).

I close this letter with a deep note of gratitude for all that Jeanne has given to Mercy, to our students and families, to our faculty and to our leadership team, and I pray that in the years to come, she will look back with great affection and pride on her lasting impact on generations of her dear Mercy Girls.

Sincerely,



Kevin G. Burke  
Chair, Board of Trustees



Mary Beth Lennon '85  
President