MISSION AT FSHA

HOW WE CREATE WOMEN OF FAITH, INTEGRITY AND TRUTH
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INTRODUCTION

Mission is essential to the success of a school and its students. However, outside of a well-crafted mission statement, what else can a school community do to see that Mission comes alive and is at the forefront of employee’s minds? In this booklet you will find a handy guide that is designed to educate you about the Mission of Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy along with some handy tips, tricks, and inspiration for embracing it in your life both inside and outside the classroom. Our hope is that it will remind us that Mission is more than just a statement we put on our letterhead, but a concept that unifies us as a community and creates a unique and lasting impact on the girls whose lives we touch.

Please take a few minutes to read over this handy guide and revisit it on occasion when designing your classes, reflecting on your role as an administrator, making plans for the future, before crafting your employee self-evaluations, or whenever you need to be inspired. We hope that this will be a meaningful resource for you for years to come. Thank you so much for all that you do as educators and employees of Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy.

SCHOOL HISTORY

Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy began as a boarding school for girls in 1st through 12th grades when it opened on September 1, 1931. The location? The former Flintridge Hotel, which was designed and built in 1927 by noted Southern California architect Myron Hunt.

When the hotel faltered during the Great Depression, Archbishop Cantwell suggested that the Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose buy the property for their planned convent and girls’ school. The entire resort, including the nine original buildings, hotel furnishings and surrounding land, cost $150,000. According to legend, three Dominican Sisters traveled up the hill to take possession of their new school, carrying with them “a statue of the Blessed Virgin, a $5 bill and their faith.” Two weeks later, the school opened its doors to 200 students.

FSHA first accepted day students in 1951 after the opening of the high school building, and the elementary grades were eventually phased out. While the boarding program continues to draw students from around the world, the day population began drawing from a wide geographic area that now includes the entire Los Angeles basin, but with a concentration from neighboring communities of the San Fernando and San Gabriel valleys.
CATHOLIC AND DOMINICAN

The Dominican Order (also known as the Order of the Preachers) is a Roman Catholic religious order. As a member of the Universal Church, the Dominicans uphold Catholic doctrine and dogma, celebrate the Sacraments and strive for social justice in the world today. The Dominican Order is best known for their commitment to holistic education, the pursuit of truth (Veritas) and their focus on preaching — spreading the Gospel through words and actions to inspire change.

The Dominican Order was founded by St. Dominic de Guzman (1172-1221) in 1219. Dominic was the son of a Spanish noble whose path as a theologian took a different turn after he encountered the Albigensians – one group of several that popped up in response to the luxe lifestyle of the clergy in the 13th century. After completing his studies, Dominic joined a community of priests at the Cathedral of Burgo de Osma that followed the Rule of Augustine, and while there, he and his bishop were assigned by Pope Innocent III to preach against the Albigensians in the South of France.

Instead of countering the Albigensians, who were considered heretical, Dominic found himself inspired by their views on apostolic life, where believers lived in accordance with the austerity of the New Testament. Whereas the larger institutions of the Church were seen by a growing number of followers as immoral and materialistic, these new sects emphasized fasting, chastity, poverty and preaching. Dominic spent nine years among them, learning and developing a new vision.

Dominic went on to receive the approval of a new order from Pope Innocent, and later, Pope Honorius III. He also incorporated traditions from the Canons Regular order of the Premonstratensians, which embraced solemn celebrations of Mass and spiritual caregiving of the faithful. Together, that formed an order in which a life of prayer and study led to a ministry of preaching in poverty – the early beginnings of the four Dominican pillars of Prayer, Study, Community and Service.

THE FOUR PILLARS

Also known as the Holy Preaching, the four Dominican pillars are the four standards of life that Dominicans live by. Based on the life and teachings of our founder, St. Dominic, the four pillars are all equally necessary to provide a strong foundation in our life. The four pillars are not meant to stand alone, instead they need one another, in the same way that our lives need balance. In this way, the four pillars are all interrelated: each one is strengthened by the other three as it strengthens the others. The four Dominican pillars are Prayer, Study, Community and Service. (These pillars are discussed in detail in the pages ahead.)

WHAT IS VERITAS?

Latin for “truth,” Veritas is one of the mottos of the Dominican order. Dominicans are searchers. They are constantly in pursuit of a deeper and fuller understanding of the truth. Whether it be in their studies, their relationships, their faith, or elsewhere, Dominicans are constantly craving and pursuing the Truth in all things.

DOMINICAN MOTTOS

LAUDARE, BENEDICERE, PRAEDICARE
“To praise, to bless, to preach”

VERITAS
“Truth”

CONTEMPLARE ET CONTEMPLATA
ALIIS TRADERE
“To contemplate and to hand on the fruits of contemplation”
One of the reasons FSHA is such a special place is that Dominican Sisters actually live on campus and work in the school. There are currently 10 Dominican Sisters that live on campus and make up the Flintridge Sacred Heart Priory. These sisters hold a variety of jobs. Some work at FSHA, serving as faculty, staff or administrators, while others work outside the school in other vocations, such as pastoral advisors or social workers.

The Flintridge Sacred Heart Priory is part of the Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose. Mission San Jose was founded by Mother Maria Pia Backes in 1876 with the intent to serve “the young, the poor and the vulnerable.” Today the congregation is made up of 195 Dominican Sisters who live in northern and southern California and seven communities in Mexico. There are also three Dominican sponsored schools — FSHA, Immaculate Conception Academy (all girls college prep high school) in San Francisco and St. Catherine’s Academy (all boys, K-8 military school). Flintridge Sacred Heart Priory is the home of the Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose who staff the school.

The Dominican Family is a global family and you can find Dominicans present and working in roughly 116 countries around the world, including India, Iraq, Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Dominican Sisters are also represented at the United Nations as part of the Dominican for Justice and Peace delegation.

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**THE MISSION AT FSHA**

Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy, a Catholic, Dominican, college-preparatory school educates young women for a life of faith, integrity and truth.

— FSHA’s Mission Statement

As employees of FSHA, we try to embrace and live out the Mission of the school. There are five main ways that we do that:

1. Modeling the characteristics of faith, integrity and truth;
2. Educating ourselves in the Catholic, Dominican identity of our school;
3. Living out the FOUR Dominican pillars of Prayer, Study, Community and Service;
4. Through our pursuit of Veritas; and
5. By challenging the young women whose lives we touch to do the same.
The Dominican pillar of Prayer reminds us to take time out of our lives to focus on what is truly important and necessary. When we take time to stop, think and re-center ourselves something very powerful happens — we stop sweating the small stuff and are allowed to focus on what truly matters, like our relationship with our God, family, friends and ourselves. There are lots of different ways to pray. You can pray by yourself in a quiet place. You can pray with a handful of people ... or thousands. You can pray with silence, words, Bible verses, music, art or even movement (ever tried Tai Chi? It’s very relaxing). That’s in addition to many traditional forms of prayer you may already be familiar with, like the Dominican Blessing, the Our Father (The Lord’s Prayer) or the Hail Mary. Prayer mentally and physically prepares us to go out into the world and be who God is calling us to be. Try to find a time during the day to stop, pause and reflect using a method of prayer that feels right to you. Not only will you go throughout your day more relaxed and focused, but you may become more aware of the areas in your life where God is calling you to be more present.
**TIPS FOR LIVING OUT THIS PILLAR:**

- Make it a point to carve out some time every day to reflect in prayer. Even if you’re just sitting in silence, use that time as an opportunity to stop, breathe, reflect and leave yourself open to God.

- Try different forms of prayer. If you’re used to traditional methods, mix it up a little and try meditation or song or dance. Introducing other kinds of prayer into your repertoire allows you to connect with God in different and sometimes even deeper ways.

- Remember: Prayer isn’t just about soliciting things from God. Be sure to include prayers of thanksgiving and even just prayerful “check-ins” with God. The goal of prayer is not to just talk to God, but to be in conversation with God.

**PRAYER AT FSHA:**

- Morning prayer as a community

- Eucharistic celebrations and prayer services throughout the year

- Prayer beginning all events

- Opportunities to prayerfully reflect (on our performance or a topic) in class

- Retreat program

St. Catherine of Siena was a woman deeply devoted to the power of prayer. Whether through penance, prayerful contemplation on her own or her service to others, Catherine was a testament to the transformative power of prayer. Despite seemingly insurmountable challenges, Catherine turned to prayer to find strength and courage to persevere. She attributed this to being in relationship with God through prayer.
The Dominican pillar of Study reminds us that we cannot go out into the world unaware of what we’re facing. While it’s great to be motivated, driven and ready to ignite change, we cannot be successful if we don’t have a firm foundation of knowledge to support us in our mission. We must make strides to educate ourselves where appropriate. An example or two if you will … Let’s say you’re committed to ending world hunger. Well, one simply cannot go out into the world and end a huge issue like that without proper education in global economics. The same goes for those who are on a quest to solve climate change: they cannot tackle the issue without first knowing about weather patterns, agriculture and carbon emissions. The pillar of study encourages us to pursue our passions and learn more about our areas of interest so that we can make a difference. It also reminds us to achieve a well-rounded education in order to be prepared to light the world on fire. That means, even if you’re no math wiz, it is still important for you to study math because not only will it help you later in life (like with balancing a checkbook or calculating your mortgage), but it develops your brain and cognitive skills to look at the world’s problems in a different light. Remember, the pillar of study is about more than just an A on an English essay or a high GPA, it’s about the pursuit of Veritas: finding Truth in all things, and we are all students in pursuit of the Truth.
DOMINICAN SAINT AND MENTOR: ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

St. Thomas Aquinas is the patron saint of students — and for good reason. Thomas Aquinas was a man committed to education and pursuit of the Truth. As a young man, he was nicknamed the “dumb ox.” This wasn’t because he lacked smarts, but because he was often silent as he deeply pondered the mysteries of the universe… okay, he was also a very large man. Regardless, Aquinas was far from dumb. He spent his life committed to God, education, and the pursuit of Veritas. Known for writing one of the greatest theological works of all time, the Summa Theologica, Aquinas educated and inspired countless people to pursue the Truth and to share their discoveries with others.

TIPS FOR LIVING OUT THIS PILLAR:

- Follow your passions and bring them into your work. Allow your areas of interest to really be a part of how others perceive you — a part of your identity.
- Share your knowledge and passions with others: who knows who you may inspire or who shares similar interests with you.
- Never stop improving. We are life-long learners and should be committed to learning and continuing to pursue Veritas throughout our lives.
- Remember: God is with you in your studies. The pursuit of Veritas is the pursuit of the ultimate Truth (also known as God). When you are living the pillar of study, you are calling upon your God-given talents to become closer to knowing and understanding God.

STUDY AT FSHA:

- Committed faculty who model the pillar of Study every day in their love for the subject matter
- FSHA’s commitment to holistic education
- FSHA’s critical thinking initiative and integration of technology
- Creative assessments that have real world applications
- Academic and college counselors who support the educational goals of the students
God didn’t create humans to be alone, instead He created us to live in community with one another. The Dominican pillar of Community reminds us that to be fully human, we need to be engaged with other people. We are members of many different communities in our lives: our family, our friend circle, our school, our culture, our age group, the global community ... the list goes on. Each different community demands something of us and offers something to us. You see, a community is more than just a group of people that you associate yourself with; it’s a group of people willing to share their lives with one another. A true community celebrates the good times and struggles through the bad times together. It makes sense then that when we are in community with others that we can learn about and grow closer to God. Through the close, loving, and supportive relationships that we form with others, we can begin to understand the kind of love that God has for us. The relationships in our lives become an example and extension of God’s love for us. This pillar challenges us to strengthen the bonds of the communities we are members of, but also to seek out new communities in our lives so that all can feel that kind of love. Creating and living in community is essential to our mission as a school.
DOMINICAN SAINT AND MENTOR:
ST. DOMINIC

Our founder, St. Dominic, was a great example of someone living out the pillar of Community. When Dominic was alive, many religious orders were hermetic in nature — meaning men and women of religious orders spent their lives locked away in solitary prayer. Dominic sought to change this and created a new kind of religious order where men and women would go out into the community and create relationships through their preaching of the Gospel (very similar to how Jesus preached, don’t you think?). Dominic recognized the need of humans to be in community with one another and how our love of God is realized and strengthened by our love for others.

TIPS FOR LIVING OUT THIS PILLAR:

• Community is a two-way street. Make sure that you are giving into your relationships just as much as you are taking from them. What are you doing to create a sense of community at home, at work or elsewhere?

• Is God a part of your community? This might not mean initiating prayer as a part of your community (even though, that’s a great idea), but how are the relationships that you form a window into the relationship you can have with God?

• Don’t struggle alone. We’ve all had those moments where we need help. In those moments, reach out to your friends, loved ones, even acquaintances. A community exists to support one another — especially in moments of need.

COMMUNITY AT FSHA:

• Faculty and staff retreats that allow us to foster community while growing closer to God

• Our +1s (clubs, sports, class moderators, etc.) that encourage us to form new communities within the high school

• Various campus events like VAPA performances and Monday lunches that allow us time to get to know one another outside of the classroom and professional setting

• Faculty and staff participation on student retreats where students and employees get to know one another on a different, Christ-centered level

• Fun signs of solidarity like our Halloween costume tradition, faculty themed dress days or video messages to the students

• An ever-present spirit of warmth and collegiality that greets all visitors at FSHA
The Dominican pillar of Service is the manifestation of the other three pillars: Prayer, Study and Community. All of the foundational work that we have been building in those three pillars reaches its crescendo in the pillar of Service. Think of it like a seed planted in soil. Over time, the seed is nourished by water, sunlight and the nutrients in the soil until it can no longer contain what lies beneath. With strength and beauty, it shoots forth into the world for others to enjoy and benefit from. If we are in conversation with God, if we pursue Truth in our studies and if we are in community with one another, then we will feel an undeniable passion to go out and preach and serve in the modern world. Now, there are many ways to live out this pillar of service. Some serve through educating others, arming them with the knowledge necessary to enact change. Some serve through their dedication to their faith — through prayer and commitment to God and preaching His word. Still others serve by going out into the community and helping others in need.
TIPS FOR LIVING OUT THIS PILLAR:

• Listen to your heart. Where do you feel like you are being called? Is there something you are really passionate about, angered by or sympathetic toward? Well then, follow it! Go out and find a way to get involved, educate people and serve.

• Bring some friends! In whatever capacity you serve, invite others to join in. It makes the experience more meaningful as you can reflect together on what your take-aways are.

• Be patient. Remember: Rome was not built in a day, and social change cannot take place overnight. Service can and will change the world, but it takes time, commitment and perseverance.

SERVICE AT FSHA:

• FSHA’s co-curricular clubs’ commitment to service both inside and outside the school community

• A developing Christian Service Program that challenges the girls to understand and experience the true Dominican definition of service

• School-wide service initiatives that inspire, motivate and unite everyone toward a common cause
A FSHA graduate is a woman of faith, who:

- Exhibits a basic knowledge of Scriptures, doctrine, practices of the Catholic Church and Dominican spirituality.
- Continues to develop an awareness of the interdependence of multiple faith traditions in a complex world.
- Demonstrates respect and love for others by acting with care, concern and compassion; acts justly, loves mercy, walks humbly with God (Micah 6:8).
- Evaluates moral choices and issues based on a well-formed conscience.
- Joins in prayer, worship and retreats, so as to experience her personal relationship with God within a community of faith.

A FSHA graduate is a life-long learner and seeker of truth, who:

- Embraces study as a way to gain greater perspective into her self, others and the world.
- Demonstrates the ability to think critically: analyze, synthesize and evaluate information from a spectrum of sources so as to assess issues of contemporary life.
- Understands the interdependence of her physical, emotional, social, spiritual, intellectual and environmental health.
• Draws a connection between her ethical stance and the ways in which she uses technology in the pursuit of learning, for social networking and media entertainment.

A FSHA graduate is a woman of _compassionate service_, who:

• Continues to develop her self-knowledge and self-acceptance so that she may recognize the inherent dignity of all persons.
• Responds openheartedly to human need in word and action (charity), using her time and talents to build a more just society (social justice).
• Shares in the Dominican tradition of women who serve generously so as to be instruments of hope.

A FSHA graduate is a _confident, creative participant in her local and global communities_, who:

• Values and experiences community as an outcome of her ability to form positive relationships.
• Recognizes the global implications of myriad social issues and her responsibility to respond locally as well as globally.
• Responds with care to the needs of the environment, lives responsibly and seeks sustainable solutions to the use of natural resources.
• Recognizes that truth emerges in, and through, collaborative efforts in community.
• Acts as an agent of unity in the diversity of communities by respecting the particularities of language, culture, race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status and religion.

A FSHA graduate is an _emerging leader for a complex world_, who:

• Continues to develop her personal sense of integrity, responsibility, creativity, patience, self-discipline and ability to deserve the trust of others.
• Exercises a growing acceptance and respect for persons with divergent points of view.
• Encourages participation, collaboration and mutuality of respect through dialogue.
• Balances individual opportunity with her efforts to build community.
• Trusts her capacity to seek out and take risks as a highly motivated leader who works assertively and cooperatively for positive change.
• Carries on the legacy of care and generosity that she has inherited from her Flintridge sisters, so as to sustain the future of FSHA for generations to come.
For more information, please contact Kelly Tramontin, Director of Mission Effectiveness, at ktramontin@fsha.org.