

THE STRUGGLE IS REAL

Confidential Parent Letter

Dear Parent,

Fall 2026

Thank you for allowing your child to participate in HSM's Fall Retreat *The Struggle Is Real* – a chance to share what it means to struggle with God - His plans for us, when the world gets challenging, and when He calls us to places we don't feel ready to go. We are so pleased to have your teen with us! The ability to get away, reflect, relax, and re-focus is so important to the mental health and well-being of young people – really, of all of us – and we are incredibly grateful for your partnership with us for your teens. Please look over the important information contained in this letter and give the other letter to your child.

Our team of student leaders has been working very hard on this retreat and there are two important ways in which we now need your help in making this is a truly effective spiritual experience for your child:

First: We ask that at least one parent or family member take the time to share their feelings about your child in the form of a letter, by simply writing a few paragraphs telling them that you love them, what they mean to you, describe their strengths, and/or share fond memories or hopes for their future. These letters will be delivered on Sunday morning of Retreat and will not be shared with anyone else. Since these letters are a secret, they can be dropped off at Saint Raphael parish office with your child's name on it prior to the Retreat or discreetly given to me when you come in person to drop your teen off, put in an envelope marked "medical information for...".

Second: Our Retreat will conclude on **Sunday, November 15th** at 1:30pm at St. Leonard. Teens will have prayed Mass together on Saturday night with Fr. Ryan. Everyone will be dismissed from St. Leonard, so if you are unable to meet us there, please make arrangements with your child to receive a ride home.

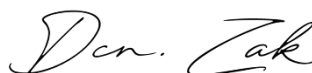
Please, please, please pray for this retreat, and especially your child during this weekend. Prayer can be a truly transformative activity – and it is perhaps the best way to connect with your teen during the retreat. After the weekend, many teens struggle to answer the simple question "how was retreat?" Whether it was a great experience for them or simply one they need more time to process, they struggle to articulate to you just why they feel the way they do. That's okay! Pray for them and start the conversation later.

The retreat begins **Friday, November 13th at 6:30pm at Saint Leonard** (4076 Case Road Avon, OH 44011). If for any reason your child will need to arrive later or leave at anytime before the end of the retreat, please email me so that we can be sure all the proper arrangements are made. We encourage the teens to not use their cell phones during the weekend so if you need to contact your child for any reason, please feel free to text my phone at 440-341-1777.

I have enclosed a letter for your child outlining what they do need to bring, please assist them with this. But a note on what we don't need to bring... because of the purpose of retreat we ask that your child refrain from bringing forms of individual entertainment. And to state the obvious, if your child is suspected of bringing or of consuming any alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs, you will be contacted to pick them up.

Thank you for your support! If you have any additional questions or concerns about the weekend or our Youth Ministry Program, please do not hesitate to contact me at zjester@saintraphaelparish.com or 440-360-7778.

Pax et Bonum,



Dcn. Zakary I. Jester
Pastoral Associate and Youth Minister