

The Tablet

The Weekly Newspaper of the Diocese of Brooklyn

August 23, 2009
Vol. 40, No. 21

Inside The Tablet

News Briefs

Editorials

Readers' Forum

Columns

Around the Diocese

Diocesan Assignments

Obituaries

Sports

Youth

Multimedia

Classifieds

Legal Notices

Services

Real Estate

Search The Tablet

Search

Explore Archives

Advertise

Subscribe

FAQ's

About The Tablet

Contact Us



St. Vincent

De Paul Society

IRS Tax Deduction
Free Towing
Serving all Five Boroughs
Charity Established 1855
718-625-1400

ARE THERE YOUNG
MEN IN HIGH SCHOOL
& COLLEGE WHO ARE
CONSIDERING A
VOCATION TO THE
PRIESTHOOD?

YES!!!

STORIES

God and the SAT: Spiritual/Academic Retreat at TMLA

S-A-T. Individually these three letters are insignificant. Put them together as in SAT, as in Standardized Aptitude Test, and they can fill even the most talented of high school students with fear, dread, and even physical pain.

In an effort to provide its students with the best all around preparation for high stress test-taking, The Mary Louis Academy in Jamaica Estates has begun a new program of SAT preparation that addresses test anxiety through participation in specifically designed SAT retreats titled "God and the SAT." When completed successfully, student performance on the SAT has increased, on average, between 165-275 points.

The program was developed by Dr. Patricia Sica Pace, Psy.D, a youth minister and educational seminar leader. Fred Herron, program director at Mount Manresa Jesuit Retreat House, S.I., and chairperson of the Religious Studies Department at Fontbonne Hall Academy, Bay Ridge, originally brought the SAT Retreat program to the Diocese of Brooklyn.



In TMLA chapel: Sister Kathleen McKinney, CSJ, principal, at left, and second from right, Sister Marie Mackey, CSJ, Religious

More News

*Put Out Into the Deep -
Ongoing Efforts at
School Planning*

Mother Dolores Hart

DSNY Rewards W'burg
Wastebusters

St. Edmund Teens Teach
Reading

2008/2009 School
Calendars

God and the SAT:
Spiritual/Academic
Retreat at TMLA

High School Open
Houses

Catholic Education Is
Integral to Church's
Mission to Proclaim the
Good News

Advisory School Boards
Thrive

Bushwick Is Home to
New Cristo Rey High
School

Parents and Children:
Talk About Internet
Safety

Websites for Every
College Student

Diocesan Students
Achieve High Scores on
State Tests

Studies Dept., conduct a session of God and the SAT with students, from left, Melissa McGinley, Faith Scozzarro, and Ashley McLoughlin.

TMLA has provided its students with traditional academic SAT preparation for decades and were excited to take part in a new and proven program that pairs academic prep with personal prep.

A daylong training program run at Mount Manresa was attended by TMLA principal, Sister Kathleen McKinney, CSJ; religious studies teachers, Sister Marie Mackey and Daniela Comunale; and social studies teacher Danielle Fusco.

The program combines specific elements of Ignatian and Benedictine spirituality along with aspects of the Medical Mission Sisters. According to Dr. Pace's program, many factors affect how students perform on the SAT exam.

These factors can be divided into two groups, academic and non-academic. Academic factors, i.e., learning, practicing, knowing the information tested, are well-known. It is the non-academic factors, however — test anxiety, distractions, fatigue, bodily habits, mental blocks, and low confidence — that may have the more powerful influence over the individual student's outcome.

Courses that deal with SAT academics are commonplace. Programs that provide concrete assistance with controlling the non-academic factors and making them work for you, are not.

"It's so easy to say, 'Don't be nervous,' but unless students are guided through the actual steps of 'how' not to be nervous, such advice is worthless and even more stress-inducing since the student is now further frustrated by one more thing to worry about. The SAT Retreat effectively treats these non-academic factors in a variety of ways," says Dr. Pace.

Junior Faith Scozzarro, said, "At first I thought this retreat wouldn't help improve my scores a lot, but through it I learned how to approach certain questions, face my fear of the test and perform at my best when I take the exam."

The SAT Retreats are held three afternoons a week at TMLA for approximately 90 minutes in the school chapel. Small groups of five to 10 students meet with a teacher who first calls the group to prayer. Over the next hour the group takes part in activities that exercise both the mind and the spirit such as quiet reflection, journaling, discussion and self-improvement exercises.

The Benedictine influence speaks of balance. "The 'balance' emphasis is on maintaining just the right level of anxiety, which means not pretending that the SAT is insignificant, but also not freaking out over the exam," noted Danielle Fusco, one of the retreat leaders.

Seventy Grammer Schools Partner with Yale for Lessons in Emotional Literacy

Fifteen New Principals Named for Local Schools

Immunize Children Before School Starts

Celebrating The Tablet's 100th Year

Faith Community Resides in Astoria

New Technology Can Help Cut Costs

The Ignatian elements stress discernment, examining your situation at the moment, taking the good and rejecting the bad and learning how to know how you focus best. Elements of the charism of the Medical Mission Sisters include posture, breathing, apprehension, and even the best foods to eat before an exam.

Each of the three elements of the retreat resonates with the students.

"The SAT retreat was an amazing experience," says junior Erica Santos who attended the daylong session at Mt. Manresa. "The exercises we did taught me how to relax before and during the test. Before the retreat I was scared about the SAT and I was not as confident as I am now. I also learned what foods are good to eat before the test to increase my energy level during the four hours of the actual exam."

Junior Ashley McLoughlin added, "The SAT Retreat was a great experience. It helped me to trust myself and my ability, as well as trust in God to help alleviate my stress. I learned how to relax more during the SAT, as well as during other tests. It even helped to increase my score! The film clips helped me to realize the person I become when I am under stress. I also appreciated learning what foods to eat to stimulate your brain to function at its best."

Each sessions ends with students applying what they have learned to a few practice SAT questions, then analyzing their approach to the questions and how the retreat experience has changed or helped that approach. The afternoon concludes with prayer.

"What's great about the God and the SAT Retreat," said Retreat Leader, Sister Marie Mackey, "is that the process can be applied to all of life's challenges."

[back to top](#)