

Matt and Jenn O'Herron
5002 Balsam Drive
Roanoke, VA 24018
Matt (571)220-5621 * Jenn (703)447-0944

February 8, 2024

RE: Recommendation of Elizabeth Gurney for Administrative Role at Roanoke Catholic School

To Whom It May Concern:

We have known Elizabeth Gurney since the Fall of 2020, when she took over as a long-term substitute for an Upper School theology teacher at Roanoke Catholic who had been let go mid-year. Ms. Gurney came in and we immediately noticed a tremendous improvement both in the theological content and discipline of the class as well as in the attitude of the students. Over the next few years, we grew to appreciate her engaging and genuine personality as she transformed her theology classes.

Ms. Gurney continued to teach theology in the Upper School for the next couple of years. She left RCS in the summer of 2022 and began to administer the Middle School Youth Group program at Our Lady of Nazareth. We left our parish that year and joined OLN, partly because of her passion and enthusiasm for youth and her leadership of the program. Jenn is now a small group leader for 7th grade girls in this MS youth program, and she witnesses first-hand how Ms. Gurney can captivate a room full of giddy middle schoolers, while successfully shaping their formation as young Catholics. Ms. Gurney knows how to engage children, and she is loved and admired by them and their parents. The MS Youth Program at OLN is flourishing under her leadership.

At the beginning of her tenure as OLN's MS Youth leader, Ms. Gurney spearheaded the birth of a retreat called "Fearless" for 8th and 9th graders, which relies in part on the involvement of older youth as leaders. The first year of Fearless, two of our older daughters participated – one an 11th grader and the other a freshman in college. Ms. Gurney led monthly planning meetings with these older youth to prepare this retreat, with the intention of being able to replicate the retreat in future years. It was a pivotal experience for our older daughters, as they learned how to use their individual gifts to help evangelize other youth. This year our 10th grade son is a youth leader for Fearless, and our 8th grade daughter is registered to attend as a participant. Ms. Gurney's administrative skills are apparent both in her role as MS youth group leader, and as the point person for the Fearless retreat.

What we would like to emphasize as strongly as possible though is not Ms. Gurney's resume, which is spot on for any administrative role at a school such as Roanoke Catholic, but her people skills. She is warm and loving and approachable. She is strong and fair, yet unafraid of conflict. Her style would be a breath of fresh air, and Roanoke Catholic is desperately in need of that. Please consider Elizabeth Gurney for an administrative role at Roanoke Catholic. She loves the school and its students, families, and teachers, many of whom she continues to work with in her role at OLN. She possesses the personality and charisma needed to lead students, faculty, parents, and alumnae in the renewal of Roanoke Catholic School. The school deserves and requires someone with the qualities Ms. Gurney can bring to a leadership role.

Sincerely,



Matt and Jennifer O'Herron