

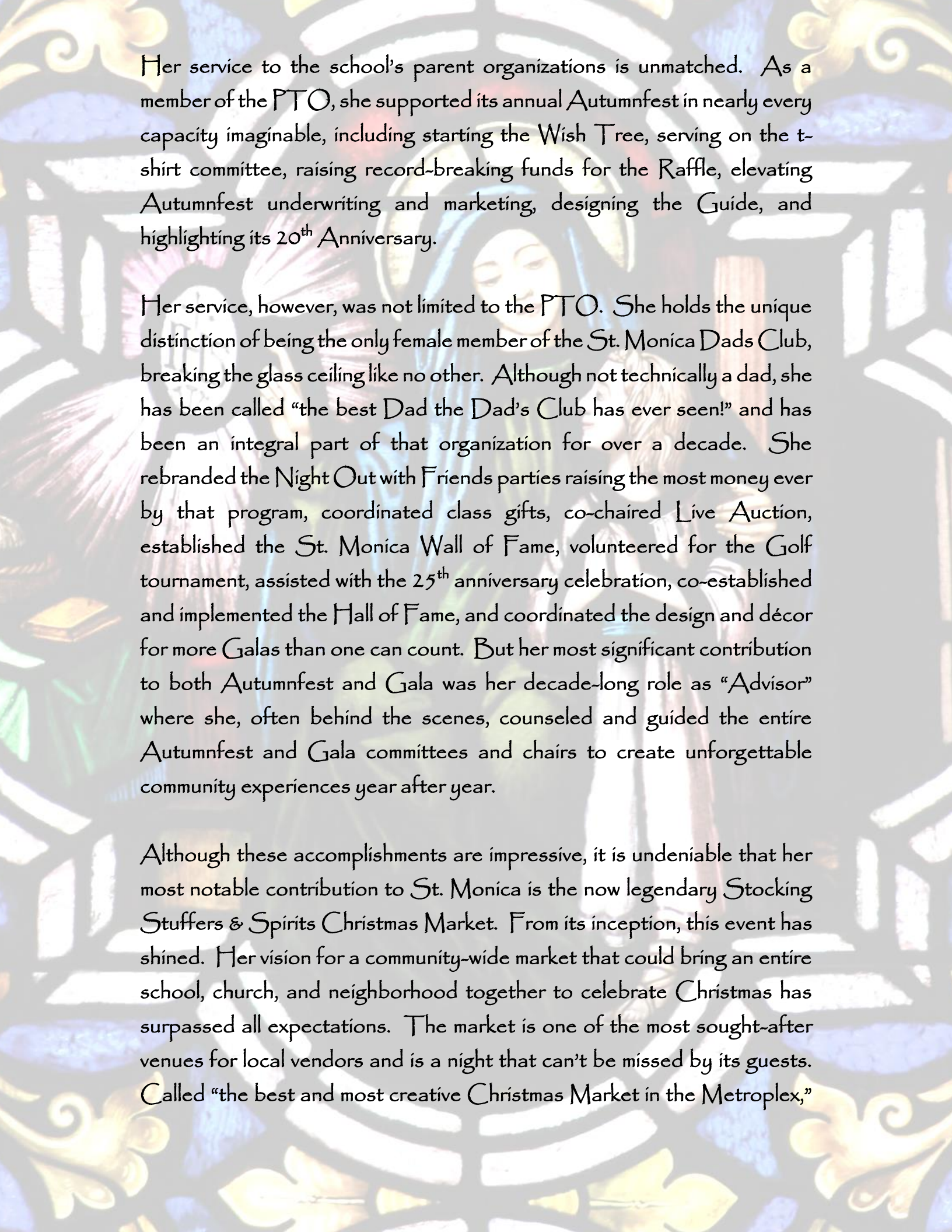
Michelle A. Mendez Lifetime Service Award

A devoted parent and servant, St. Monica embodies the qualities many parents strive to emulate. Michelle Mendez was a St. Monica parent who truly possessed the spirit of a servant leader in her personal, professional, and community relationships. She was an invaluable asset to many organizations, and the St. Monica community was one of the lucky recipients of her devoted volunteerism.

Inspired by her dedication to service, The Michelle A. Mendez Lifetime Service Award was created in an effort to recognize a current 8th grade parent who shares her passion for serving others.

This year's recipient has a humble devotion to sharing Christ's love in our community. She is an inspiration within our school and church, and her selfless and generous nature invites those around her to embrace and serve others.

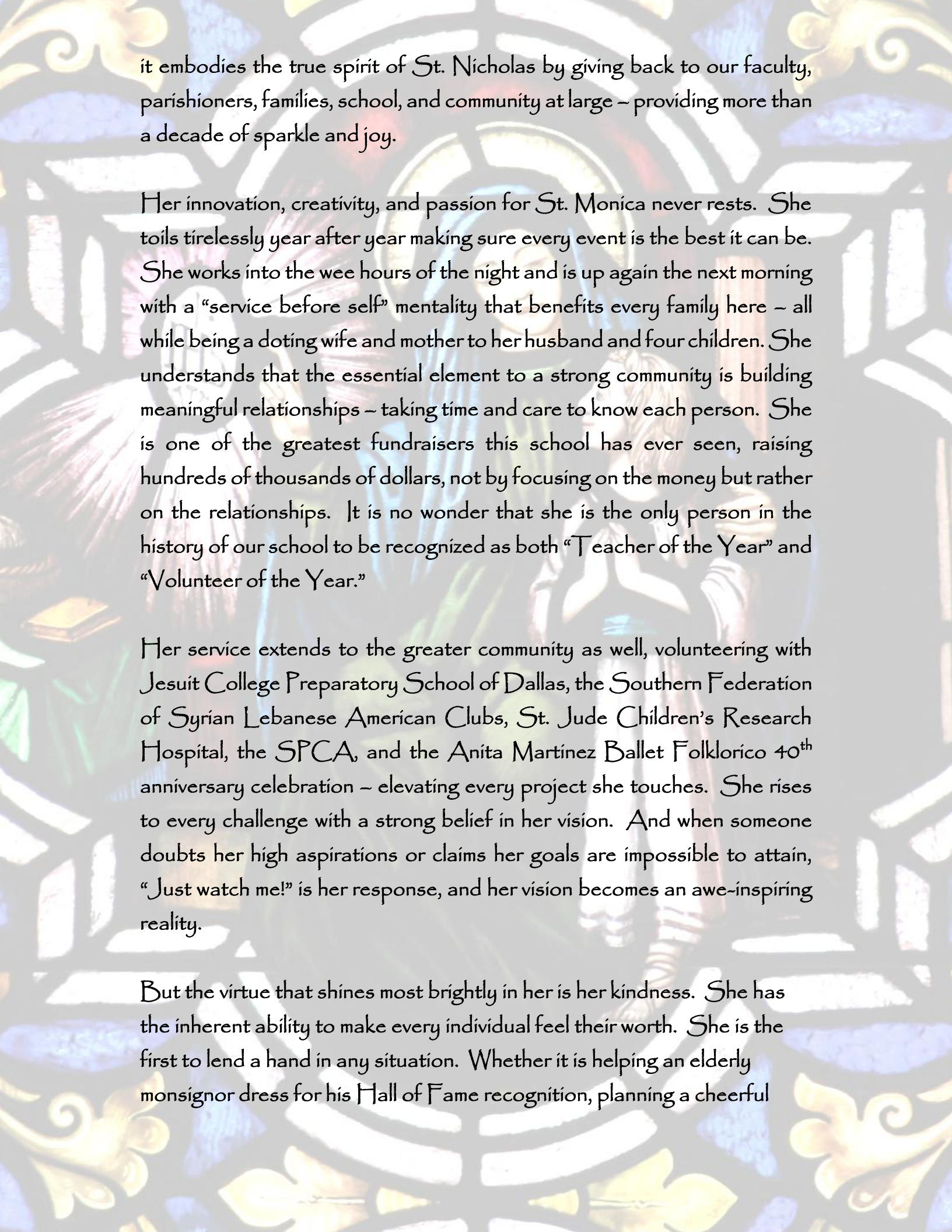
Her loyalty and dedication to the community is evident in the many organizations she supports. Her service began decades ago as a teacher at St. Monica school and director of the dance team. When her own children enrolled in St. Monica, she jumped in with both feet to serve the community. Acting as a true ambassador for the school, she served as Grade Level Representative, Homeroom Parent, and GAP Captain. She served on the Strategic Plan Communications and Marketing Pillar, the 60th Anniversary committee, the June Cooper Learning Center development committee, the Endowment Trust Legacy Live committee, the New Family Welcome committee, and organized countless retirement receptions for many beloved administrators, teachers, and staff.



Her service to the school's parent organizations is unmatched. As a member of the PTO, she supported its annual Autumnfest in nearly every capacity imaginable, including starting the Wish Tree, serving on the t-shirt committee, raising record-breaking funds for the Raffle, elevating Autumnfest underwriting and marketing, designing the Guide, and highlighting its 20th Anniversary.

Her service, however, was not limited to the PTO. She holds the unique distinction of being the only female member of the St. Monica Dads Club, breaking the glass ceiling like no other. Although not technically a dad, she has been called "the best Dad the Dad's Club has ever seen!" and has been an integral part of that organization for over a decade. She rebranded the Night Out with Friends parties raising the most money ever by that program, coordinated class gifts, co-chaired Live Auction, established the St. Monica Wall of Fame, volunteered for the Golf tournament, assisted with the 25th anniversary celebration, co-established and implemented the Hall of Fame, and coordinated the design and décor for more Galas than one can count. But her most significant contribution to both Autumnfest and Gala was her decade-long role as "Advisor" where she, often behind the scenes, counseled and guided the entire Autumnfest and Gala committees and chairs to create unforgettable community experiences year after year.

Although these accomplishments are impressive, it is undeniable that her most notable contribution to St. Monica is the now legendary Stocking Stuffers & Spirits Christmas Market. From its inception, this event has shined. Her vision for a community-wide market that could bring an entire school, church, and neighborhood together to celebrate Christmas has surpassed all expectations. The market is one of the most sought-after venues for local vendors and is a night that can't be missed by its guests. Called "the best and most creative Christmas Market in the Metroplex,"

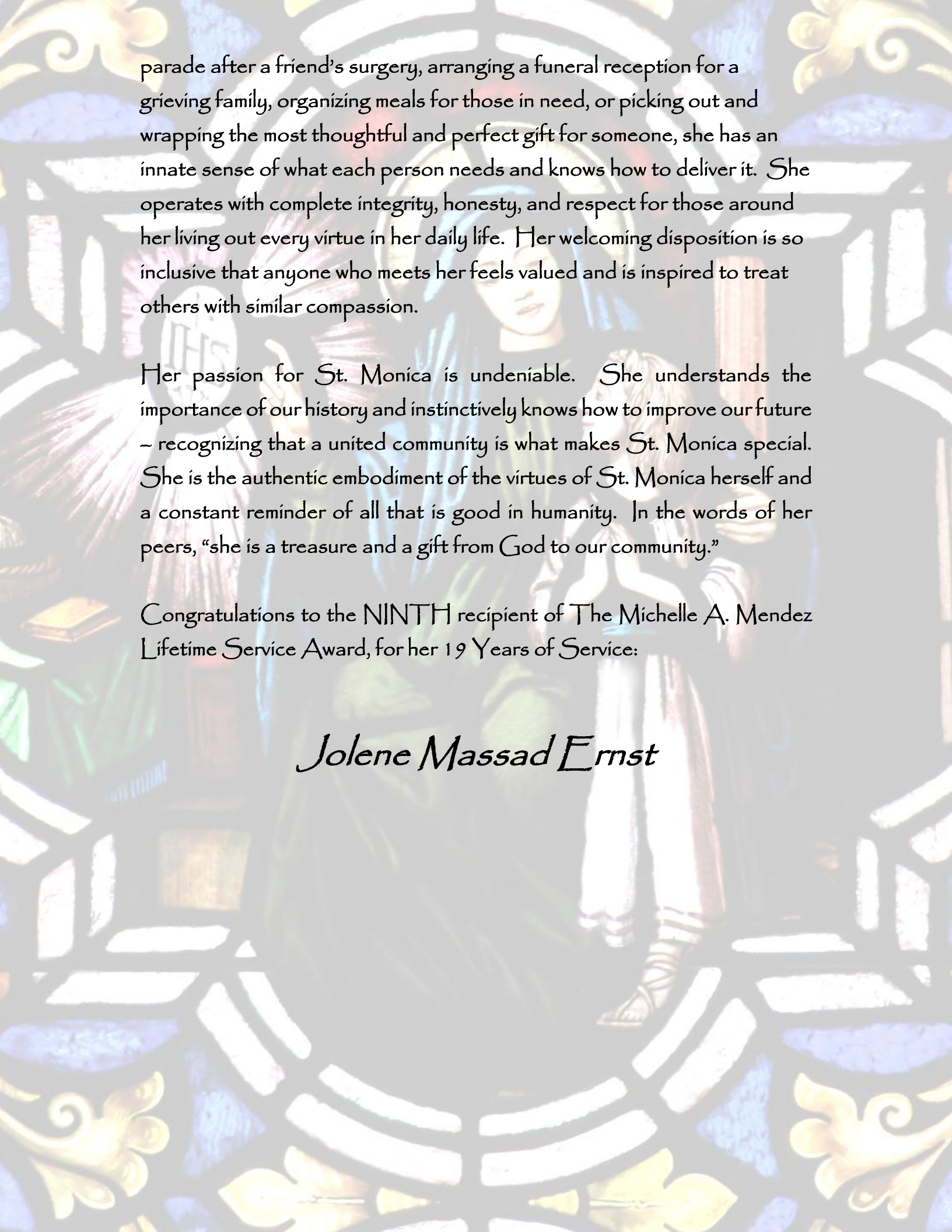


it embodies the true spirit of St. Nicholas by giving back to our faculty, parishioners, families, school, and community at large – providing more than a decade of sparkle and joy.

Her innovation, creativity, and passion for St. Monica never rests. She toils tirelessly year after year making sure every event is the best it can be. She works into the wee hours of the night and is up again the next morning with a “service before self” mentality that benefits every family here – all while being a doting wife and mother to her husband and four children. She understands that the essential element to a strong community is building meaningful relationships – taking time and care to know each person. She is one of the greatest fundraisers this school has ever seen, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars, not by focusing on the money but rather on the relationships. It is no wonder that she is the only person in the history of our school to be recognized as both “Teacher of the Year” and “Volunteer of the Year.”

Her service extends to the greater community as well, volunteering with Jesuit College Preparatory School of Dallas, the Southern Federation of Syrian Lebanese American Clubs, St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, the SPCA, and the Anita Martínez Ballet Folklorico 40th anniversary celebration – elevating every project she touches. She rises to every challenge with a strong belief in her vision. And when someone doubts her high aspirations or claims her goals are impossible to attain, “Just watch me!” is her response, and her vision becomes an awe-inspiring reality.

But the virtue that shines most brightly in her is her kindness. She has the inherent ability to make every individual feel their worth. She is the first to lend a hand in any situation. Whether it is helping an elderly monsignor dress for his Hall of Fame recognition, planning a cheerful



parade after a friend's surgery, arranging a funeral reception for a grieving family, organizing meals for those in need, or picking out and wrapping the most thoughtful and perfect gift for someone, she has an innate sense of what each person needs and knows how to deliver it. She operates with complete integrity, honesty, and respect for those around her living out every virtue in her daily life. Her welcoming disposition is so inclusive that anyone who meets her feels valued and is inspired to treat others with similar compassion.

Her passion for St. Monica is undeniable. She understands the importance of our history and instinctively knows how to improve our future – recognizing that a united community is what makes St. Monica special. She is the authentic embodiment of the virtues of St. Monica herself and a constant reminder of all that is good in humanity. In the words of her peers, “she is a treasure and a gift from God to our community.”

Congratulations to the NINTH recipient of The Michelle A. Mendez Lifetime Service Award, for her 19 Years of Service:

Jolene Massad Ernst