

Catholic Education Coronavirus Taskforce Newsletter

April 7, 2020

A Message for Holy Week from The Most Reverend Michael J. Fitzgerald, D.D., J.D., J.C.D., V.G.

Dear School Families,

No doubt the last several weeks have been an unusual, almost surreal, time for all of us, particularly our students, families, teachers, administrators, and school staff members. In the midst of uncertainty and challenge, it is heartening to see and hear how so many of you have risen to the occasion, pulled together, and with great creativity, industry and personal sacrifice implemented a very successful flexible learning program that has enabled our students to continue their education and faith formation despite the hardships caused by the Coronavirus pandemic.



While these past weeks have been marked by anxiety and uncertainty, and the weeks ahead may bring much the same, they are also a time when some valuable lessons of life, and principles of Catholic education, are being lived out and demonstrated by our students, teachers, and school supporters. Working together for the common good, moving forward in faith through uncharted waters, and pooling resources for the benefit of all, demonstrate that faith, commitment, and dedication to the mission of providing a faith based, value centered, excellent academic education to our students is alive and well during a time of unprecedented crisis and upheaval in our lives and world. For this we can be grateful despite our struggles, while at the same time we must also be mindful of the suffering of so many impacted by the Coronavirus, whether through the loss of life or health, worries about financial and employment security, or simply the impact of “social distancing” and “stay at home” restrictions that impact all of our relationships and daily activities.

In this environment, the gift of faith becomes all the more important. During this week that we call Holy Week, it is comforting to recall that God is with us in our struggles. As we commemorate the passion and death of Jesus on the cross, the prophet Isaiah in the liturgy of Good Friday reminds us that *“it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured...upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole.”* Of course, we know that the message of the cross is not the complete story of Holy Week. Rather, Jesus teaches us that it is through our crosses, accepted in faith that we come to new life and resurrection. In the Gospel of Matthew proclaimed at the Easter Vigil Mass, the angel tells the women at the empty tomb: *“Do not be afraid! I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said.”*

May the Risen Lord continue to strengthen our faith and renew our hope! My thanks and prayers for each of you and your families for continued health, safety and a blessed Easter.

A Message from Father
Matthew Guckin Director of
Catholic Mission and Identity

“Hosanna”

Dear Friends,

Hosanna in the highest!

These are words familiar to all of us. We pray them at every Mass we celebrate and we do so before falling to our knees as the priest holds aloft the Most Blessed Sacrament.

The meaning of these words and the significance of this act are profound, but perhaps not commonly understood.

That word - *Hosanna* - means 'God save us NOW!' And that gesture of falling to our knees is the posture of a beggar. We are begging God to save us.

At Mass, we bring whatever we need to be "saved from" to our God and we beg Him to save and sustain us. If there are 100 people at Mass then there are 1000 things people need to be saved from: addiction, despair, anxiety, broken families, broken hearts, depression, financial ruin, sickness, the death of a loved one. The list goes on and on and on.

This week is a most unusual, perhaps even terrifying, Holy Week. It's a week where the word *Hosanna* is invoked in an intense way as Jesus rides to His death into the city of Jerusalem as the people shout *Hosanna!*

As we journey through this week in the midst of this plague of Coronavirus, let us make it our habit to break from the news and fall to our knees and shout to God as we beg Him - *Hosanna...save us NOW* from this virus and the ripple effects it causes.

God bless you and stay healthy!

Father Matt Guckin



From the Office of the
Secretary for Elementary
Education

Elementary Education: Care for the Community

Catholic Schools have long taught and carried out the Corporal Works of Mercy and service is an integral part of our Lenten preparations. However, the Coronavirus has given new meaning to what may be done for those in need, especially during this Holy season of Lent. Our elementary schools have taken the challenge of how may we live the Corporal Works of Mercy while sheltering in place to heart. Below are just a few heartwarming stories.

Corporal Works of Mercy

Feed the hungry

Give drink to the thirsty

Give alms to the poor

Shelter the homeless

Visit the sick

Visit the imprisoned

Bury the dead

Pope John Paul II Regional Catholic Elementary School made wonderful pictures and signs for the residents of Genesis Health Care. The cards and posters lifted the spirits of the homebound who are unable to leave the facility during this time.



St. Anthony of Padua School in South Philadelphia, fully aware that the world needs a bit of hope and joy during these difficult times, worked to spread smiles to those most in need. The students and teachers took part in their very own "Rainbows of Hope" Day! Students were asked to make the day extra special and dress in rainbow colors and to draw and color rainbows to spread hope. The responses received were both amazing and overwhelming attesting to the outstanding school community. It warmed many hearts and brought much-needed smiles to many faces.



Sacred Heart School in Oxford, Pennsylvania, is providing children and youth who are impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic with free meals thanks to Nutritional Development Services of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia (NDS). NDS is currently sponsoring 24 feeding sites throughout the region to ensure that children and youth aged 18 years or younger continue to have access to wholesome nourishing meals. Faculty, Staff, Parishioners, and Rev. Michael Hennelly, Pastor, rallied together and distributed a total of 900 "Grab and Go" Meals this week to children and youth in their community. All breakfast and lunch options provide students with their daily requirement for calories and key growth nutrients.



One group of parents from St. Anastasia School gathered online for a dual purpose of supporting health care agencies and local businesses who had been so good to the school through the years. The first step taken involved sending food from the local pizzeria to the doctors and nurses at the local hospital. Other parents found out, they too wanted to contribute, and a Venmo account was created. In one day, \$1,200 was raised. Currently food has been sent to 12 hospitals, police and fire departments, and EMS services from 10 local delis, pizzerias, bakeries, and candy stores. The effort proved to be a win-win-win for workers, businesses, and parents who felt good after contributing to the effort.

During Holy Week, many of the schools will be hosting a faculty retreat and a student retreat provided by the Office of Catechetical Formation and the Office of Catholic Education. Prayers will be sent to heaven above for everyone dealing with the Coronavirus. As always, we pray for all our families and students.

Blessed Holy Week to all.

From the Office of the
Director of Technology, K-12

Helping Teachers Learn and Grow as Student Learning Continues

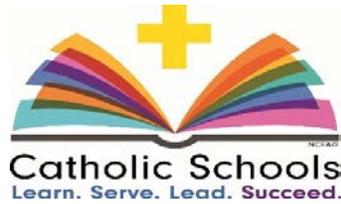
The Technology Department of the Office of Catholic Education continues to be in full support of our administrators, teachers, students and parents. Over the past two weeks, the AoPTech team has provided support for our schools in their continued implementation of flexible instruction. Specifically, the team has transitioned one of the most popular support engagements to virtual meetings. Beginning on March 25th, Virtual Minute Clinics (VMCs) have been hosted on Wednesdays and Fridays. These virtual engagements allow teachers to "pop" into an online meeting to ask a question about a specific tool, strategy or approach for integrating technology. The VMCs have already help over 40 individual teachers over the first two weeks!



Our schools have also leveraged technology to keep our students and greater school communities engaged in their faith. From Morning Prayer on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram to Virtual Rosary Rallies, retreat opportunities and prayer requests our school leaders continue to lead by keeping our Catholic faith at the forefront of our flexible instruction.

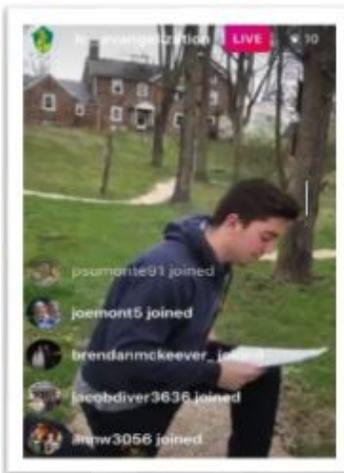
From the Office of the
Superintendent of
Secondary Schools

Secondary Schools: A Powerhouse of Prayer



As we approach Holy Week 2020, we are reminded of the words of Archbishop Nelson Pérez, “Our Lenten journey has taken an unexpected turn with the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19. Though we are living out concepts such as isolation, quarantine, and social distancing – as believers and followers of Jesus Christ we know we are never truly alone and that He is always by our side.” While we may not be together in our parishes this week, we can pray together. Imagine the strength of all of the prayers of the faithful of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia united this Holy Week.

Archbishop José H. Gomez, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), teaches us that, “This Holy Week will be different. Our churches may be closed, but Christ is not quarantined and His Gospel is not in chains.” Each of our Archdiocesan High Schools have prepared a series of prayers, reflections, and retreat materials to support their students, families, and teachers so that the power of prayer may be united to become a POWERHOUSE for all of those in need during this most distressing time.



Lansdale Catholic
student leaders, Peter
McHugh and John
McCabe, pray the
Stations of the Cross.
Though limited by social
distancing, students
gathered using Instagram.



Bishop Shanahan High School students joined together via live stream for a beautiful praise and worship in a Eucharistic Holy Hour <https://www.facebook.com/stjosephrc.org>. Father John Donia, campus minister, was the celebrant and Mrs. Kilpatrick provided music.



West Catholic Preparatory High School will offer an online retreat for their faculty on April 7th with reflections by School Minister, Father Joseph Zaleski and a session with Reverend Monsignor George Majoros. The retreat is entitled Missionary of Mercy for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Archbishop Wood High School will host, via YouTube, on April 7th at 10:00 AM the Stations of the Cross during Pandemic of COVID-19 narrated by the Wood students.

Roman Catholic High School will host the Rosary on Facebook Live! Students, faculty, alumni and family are invited to join in the praying of the Rosary on Facebook Live on Wednesday of Holy Week at 3:00 pm. The Rosary is offered up for the intentions of the community.

Little Flower High School community will participate in the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary led by Father Joseph McCaffrey followed by quiet reflection. Father will then celebrate Mass on a live stream for the school community.

Monsignor Bonner & Archbishop Prendergast High School students will be praying the Stations of the Cross on April 8th at 3:00 PM via ZOOM.

The AOP Schools are indeed a POWERHOUSE of prayer. During this time of Holy Week, we offer the resources below for all families with children in grades K-12. Let us join our prayers to those of our young people and their school communities. As

Archbishop Gomez wrote, "Christ is not quarantined and His Gospel is not in chains". May all of our families be blessed especially during this Holy Week.

Masses and Adoration

[Holy Week Liturgies with Archbishop Pérez](#)

[Word On Fire Daily Masses](#)

[Vatican News Live Streaming Pope Francis' Masses](#)

[Online Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration](#)



Scripture and Reflection

[Magnificat](#)

The online version, which includes the daily readings, prayers and hymns for personal or family prayer, has been made available for free for the time being. The kids' version, [MagnifiKid](#) for ages 6-12, is also free online during this crisis.

[Give Us This Day](#)

The online version, which includes the daily readings, prayers, hymns and reflections, has been made available for free.

[U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops](#)

The U.S. Bishops offer readings in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) with [audio](#) and [video](#) reflections for free.

Prayer Resources

[Act of Spiritual Communion](#)

In his encyclical, "[Ecclesia de Eucharistia](#)" ("A Eucharistic Church"), in April 2003, St. John Paul II encouraged the practice of spiritual communion, "which has been a wonderful part of Catholic life for centuries and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life."

[Coronavirus Prayers](#)

This page includes a list of prayers specific to this crisis as well as links to general Catholic prayers and prayers for Lent. The [Catholic Health Association of the United States](#) also offers several prayers including "[A Prayer for Persons Suffering from the Coronavirus](#)."

[How to Pray the TV Mass from Home](#)

The Diocese of Sioux Falls, South Dakota offers these tips to help you participate more in Mass from home.

[Light a Candle Online](#)

The National Shrine of St. John Neumann is inviting people to light a candle virtually and share your prayer intention.

[Novena During Sickness](#)

The Archdiocese of Denver offers this novena with video reflections through the intercession of Our Lady of Monte Berico, protector in moments of plague. Several other [helpful prayers](#) are also available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

[Prayer Service from Your Home](#)

The Archdiocese of Washington offers seven helpful steps to set up and have a prayer service at your home.

[Stations of the Cross at Home](#)

Several online resources are available to help you do the [stations](#) during [Lent](#), depending on your needs. These include the [Way of the Cross: Stations and Meditations from Arkansas](#) and [Stations of the Cross with Father Jason](#) at St. Thomas Aquinas University Parish in Fayetteville.

[Virtual Prayer Ministry](#)

This resource from the Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin, offers a step-by-step process for parish leaders to pray for parishioners suffering from anxiety and need to talk and be supported in prayer.



Faith Formation

[EWTNKids](#)

EWTN's kids' videos and faith formation series are available to watch online.

[Holy Heroes Videos](#)

This YouTube channel has lots of creative and helpful videos to teach the Catholic faith to children.

[Keeping the Faith Amid COVID-19](#)

Our Sunday Visitor will offer daily stories to help keep you mentally and spiritually grounded during this time of uncertainty.

[My Catholic Kids](#)

This website is making their library of Mass videos for the Children's Missalette available free to all.

[Strong Catholic Family Faith](#)

This website offers tips on helping parents talk with children about the Coronavirus, a list of fun and educational things to do with kids at home and much more.

[Tiny Saints](#)

This website is providing free downloads and activities for families who may miss school, Mass and other events.

**Additional Resources
from the Counseling
Support Sub-Committee**

A Trauma-Informed Approach to Teaching Through Coronavirus

Experts from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network share their recommendations for educators supporting students during the COVID-19 crisis. (March 23, 2020 by Teaching Tolerance Staff.)

Key Points to Keep in Mind:

- Establishing a Routine and Maintaining Clear Communication Are Crucial
- Relationships and Well-Being Can Take Priority Over Assignment and Behavioral Compliance
- Provide a Sense of Safety
- Maintain Connectedness
- Instill Hope
- Remember Students in Particular Situations
- Remember Kinds of Stressors or Potential Trauma
- Prioritize Educators Self Care

For the full article, go to [A Trauma-Informed Approach to Teaching Through Coronavirus](#)
