



WELCOME BACK 2020



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS *in the*
ARCHDIOCESE *of* NEW YORK

Faith-Based. Future-Focused.

PASTOR NEWSLETTER • FALL 2020



Dear Pastors,

This fall newsletter is the most anticipated publication in some time, as we are finally able to open our school doors again. While we successfully transitioned to remote learning last spring, you and I both know the best place for our students to pray, learn and grow together are within the walls, halls and classrooms of our beloved schools. No doubt, the academically superior education of which we are so proud will continue to thrive, no matter the challenges put in our path during the academic year ahead.

This year, as it has for the past two centuries, our values-infused curriculum -our Catholic identity- will define us, showing the world what can be achieved when you teach tolerance, generosity, kindness and mercy alongside a technology-driven, first-rate educational system. Our pastors, priests and deacons have been invaluable partners in this effort.

As His Eminence is fond of saying, along with preparing our students for high school and college, we must always be mindful of our mission to “get them into Heaven.” On these pages you will see beautiful examples of what we do and why we do it. From the altruistic service of a suburban fourth grader, to a Catholic school graduate saving lives during harrowing shifts as a nurse at the epicenter of the COVID-19 crisis in a city hospital, this newsletter shows who our students are and what they can become.

With thanks for your partnership and prayers for continued success,



Mr. Michael J. Deegan
Superintendent of Schools
Archdiocese of New York



TODAY'S STUDENTS, TOMORROW'S LEADERS: A SAINT JOSEPH SCHOOL FOURTH GRADER'S VOCATION

The Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of New York have been educating students for over 200 years and have produced some of the most prominent and respected leaders in our society. The lessons learned inside our Catholic school buildings leave a lasting impact on our alumni's faith and moral alignment, leading to their development as politicians, philanthropists, caretakers, and artists.

The tenets of service displayed by so many of our graduates begin to develop in current Catholic school students from an early age thanks to a values-infused, faith-based curriculum. One such student is Max Rivera, a fourth grader at Saint Joseph School in Bronxville who made it his mission to repair tattered American flags throughout his town.

Max noted that this undertaking is unique and said, "I first noticed torn flags when I was in Kindergarten. One day after school, I made my Mom pull over and take me inside the Post Office. I met the Postmaster, who was very nice. He changed the flag for me right away." From that moment on, Max has been motivated to contact local and federal organizations when flags become tattered and has developed partnerships with several organizations to facilitate the replacement of our nation's flag.

When COVID-19 struck, Max did not let his four-year pursuit expire. During the pandemic, when Max realized one of his beloved flags was ripped, he quickly contacted his friend — the Postmaster — and it was replaced. "We need to honor our country, especially in this time," he said.

Mary Ellen Sanchez, principal of Saint Joseph School, said Max "is an extraordinary youngster from an amazing, legacy- religious, Yonkers-based family. All of his family, including his grandparents, reflect what is great about our schools and our community in terms of their loyalty and service!" He is a vintage toy collector, "loves all things '70s and '80s," a baseball player, and is "extremely artistic." In fact — Max was honored to receive a tour of Village Hall, where his drawing of George Washington is proudly displayed.

Max's perseverance and ability to be proactive about making this world a better place is representative of all of the students in our Catholic schools, and we do not doubt that he—as well as his classmates—will make up the next generation of leaders in this country.



CATHOLIC IDENTITY

The mission of the Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of New York is to ensure our schools are Christ-centered, academically excellent communities that welcome all students and teach them to be lifelong learners and leaders energized by fidelity to Christ, His Church, and one another. Therefore, one of the most important priorities of the Office of Catholic Identity is to ensure that a spiritually rich curriculum is taught in all of our schools.



Part of this curriculum is the Values Infusion Program. Each month a different value is assigned to that month. The 2020–21 Values calendar can be found on CatholicSchoolsNY.org, and it was also distributed to all principals and teachers at our schools. The abridged version is pictured here. The full calendar not only reflects the values, but also provides

a scripture verse, the season of the liturgical year in which the value occurs and other resources to help educators teach to the whole child — spiritually, academically and socially.

From *compassion* in September to *unity* in June, the monthly values are consistent for all of our schools, from PreK to eighth grade. Educators are asked to incorporate the monthly value into all areas of the curriculum. The Values Infusion Program is also integrated with our Anti-Bullying/Safe Environment curriculum to ensure they are fully incorporated into all aspects of student learning.

The Office of Catholic Identity recommended free resources from *Sadlier* for use over the summer. These resources were made available to principals, teachers, students and their families. They included: This Week's Liturgy, Question of the Week, the Lives of the Saints, and Postcards from the Vatican. Additionally, several free resources from *Catholic Sprouts* were recommended for use during the summer by teachers, students and their families. These included the Rosary, Rosary Warriors, Eucharist, Saints, Scripture and Mary in Heaven.

Religion resources will continue to be reviewed in order to recommend the best ones to principals, teachers, students and their families during the 2020-21 school year. The Office of Catholic Identity, led by Executive Director Sister June Clare Tracy, O.P., Ed.D. and Associate Superintendent of Mission Effectiveness Sr. Anne Massell, P.B.V.M., will continue to ensure students are taught the rich history and practices of our religion, understanding they are a part of something greater than themselves.



RENOUNCING RACISM IN ALL ITS FORMS

The website of the ADNY Office of Youth Ministry (www.oymny.org) has links to the resources found below. These links provide excellent resources to help you continue to build a culture of listening, under-standing and inclusion and to combat the evil of racism.

- Commission of Religious Leaders statement on the death of George Floyd
- Statement of U.S. Bishop Chairmen in Wake of Death of George Floyd and National Protests
- Open Wide our Hearts Webinar Series: How to Apply “Open Wide Our Hearts: A Pastoral Letter Against Racism” in a Ministry Context
- Combatting Racism – Educational Resources
- USCCB Intercultural Competencies

YESTERDAY'S STUDENTS, TODAY'S LEADERS

AN INTERVIEW WITH CAMILLE CULBENGAN, CATHOLIC SCHOOL ALUMNAE & HERO



Camille Culbengan is a pediatric nurse at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital. However, before she was a health care hero, she was a Catholic school student at Saint Francis Xavier School as well as Preston High School, both in the Bronx.

NYPH expressed its utmost respect and gratitude for Camille's response to the COVID-19 crisis: "As soon as COVID-19 hit, Camille Culbengan volunteered to work extra shifts at NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center in the adult emergency department and has since added on shifts at NewYork-Presbyterian Allen. Camille is no stranger to helping out in times of need: She had previously volunteered to work triage tents in the Bahamas in the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian. Here, she shares what she has faced as a nurse in the pandemic."

We interviewed Camille about how her Catholic education helped to shape the person she is today, and she calls upon her faith to help her with the challenging situations she faces today.

How has your Catholic education shaped who you are in life?

Camille: My catholic education has completely shaped who I am in life. One of the things I always remember every day is something we always used to chant in Preston. "We are women of dignity, honor and respect. We get respect, by giving respect" and also "Compassion matters." Those are two mottos that I always strive to live out with everything I do, especially working in the medical field with very sick people.

What is your fondest memory of your Catholic elementary school and Catholic high school?

Camille: My fondest memory of Catholic elementary school and Catholic high school was always our spirit days and pep rallies. There was such a huge feeling of family and togetherness despite all of our differences, where we were from, who we are, orientation, financial situation, we were all together as one, having fun, enjoying each other and the life God gave us.

Tell us about your favorite teacher, what makes him or her special? If you could speak to this person right now, what would you say to them?

Camille: My favorite teacher was my music teacher Ms. Fusco. I sat in her music class freshman year, and she was recruiting people to join wind ensemble, which was basically band for wind instruments. She took one look at me, saw something in me, and said "You! you're joining, and you're playing the alto saxophone." Since then we created such an amazing and valuable friendship. She's guided me through a lot of hardships in high school, both personal and school related. She was truly a role model too, always inspired me and motivated me to do better. If I could speak to her right now, I would probably say thank you. Thank you for helping me and guiding me through such a crucial and tough time in my life. For not only being my teacher, and a friend while navigating becoming a young adult and figuring out who I am going to be in this world.

(Continued...)

How has your spirituality informed your life decisions?

Camille: I take a lot of time to think before I make any huge life decisions, I talk and pray to God for guidance, hoping that he will send me a sign. I try to listen to my heart, and believe that whatever decision I make, right or wrong, it is what God wants for me. God has a plan for me, and everything happens for a reason. So I must keep an open mind, open heart, and be mindful of what he is teaching or telling me.

Why do you think your parents thought it was important for you to attend a Catholic school for elementary and high school?

Camille: My parents are Filipino, and so they are very traditional Catholics. They believed it was very important to know God, his followers, his beliefs, to have a higher power to believe in and take comfort in.

Do you keep in touch with friends from St. Francis Xavier Elementary School and Preston High School?

Camille: I do, both schools have provided a home away from home that fostered the opportunity to be able to make friendships that will last lifetimes, despite distance, time, and whatever happens in life. Whenever we meet up, it's like no time has passed. We seem to always be cheering each other on behind the scenes, praying for a safe good life, success, and happiness.

What is your relationship with your faith?

Camille: I think recently my relationship with my faith has taken quite the toll, working as a nurse -- especially during the pandemic -- has really shaken it. I have seen so many good people pass away, and a lot of things do not make sense. But despite the obstacles and hardships, I have to keep the faith and believe that God has a plan for all of us. He is here for us, and is making us closer, stronger to and for one another.

Was there a particular moment during a shift when you had nowhere else to turn but your relationship with Jesus to pull you through? What happened?

Camille: Yes, I've actually had a lot of those moments during this pandemic. There has been a lot of moments when I am the only company that my patients have due to restricted visitation. Some of these patients are dying, or about to be intubated. I connect my patients with their family members on the phone and it's heart breaking hearing them cry and say goodbye cause it might just be goodbye. I had to turn to Jesus to give my patients strength to endure the emotional, mental and physical pain they are going through. I had to turn to Jesus to give me strength to stay strong and focused through the pandemic with everything I am experiencing and witnessing and give my teammates the strength as well.



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