

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

Faith-Based.Future-Focused.

PARENT NEWSLETTER • FALL 2021





Dear Catholic School Families,

Thanks to the continued heroic efforts of our pastors, principals, and teachers, as well as the support of all of our families and benefactors, Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of New York have been open safely for 100% in-person instruction. Leading the way, our shepherd, Timothy Cardinal Dolan, is still the loudest and proudest voice advocating for our school system and Catholic schools across the country.

Among many items, this Fall Parent Newsletter contains many images and stories from our schools since we opened on Wednesday, September 8, including images from that first day of school in East Harlem at the Academy of St. Paul & St. Ann (top right), several visits by His Eminence throughout our school system (middle right), and a look at how our schools recognized Hispanic Heritage Month (bottom right).

Please also enjoy very personal pieces contributed by two valued pillars of our Central Westchester Region. Fr. Anthony Sorgie, Pastor of Immaculate Conception and Annunciation in Tuckahoe, and Ms. Helena Castilla-Byrne, Principal of Our Lady of Victory School in Mt. Vernon, contributed articles for the Pastor's Perspective and Principal Spotlight features. Like all of our pastors, principals, and teachers, they work tirelessly for our great Catholic schools. As always, I thank you so very much for your invaluable support and for choosing a Catholic education for your children.

Wishes for a safe and happy fall,



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



For a welcome address video to the ADNY Catholic schools community from Superintendent of Schools Mr. Michael J. Deegan, scan the QR code or visit [youtube.com/watch?v=HRvL4ysz-WM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRvL4ysz-WM)



## #ARCHDAY1

Thanks to the bravery and hard work of principals, pastors, teachers, and staff, all 171 Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of New York were able to open once again for the first day of school on Wednesday, September 8, 2021. Please enjoy these snapshots of the first day back for students within the Archdiocese, who were thrilled to return to school for another year of in-person learning.



Vivien, 3 years old, poses for her first day of Pre-K 3 at the Academy of St. Paul and St. Ann.



Classmates smile for the camera in front of the St. Paul School Playground.



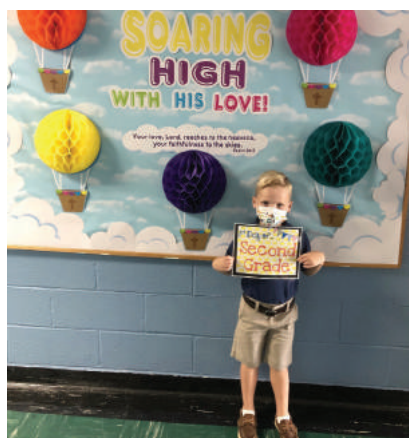
Mother and daughter share a sweet moment at drop-off for the Academy of St. Paul and St. Ann.



A Kindergarten student at Immaculate Conception School in Tuckahoe embraces self-expression.



A student on her first day at St. John School in Goshen shows off her new lunchbox.



Anthony, who attends St. Frances de Chantal School in the Bronx, celebrates his first day of second grade.



St. Francis of Assisi School in the Bronx welcomes back close to 450 students with a playful banner.



Various schools throughout the Archdiocese of New York featured their staff and students on the first day of school through the hashtag #ArchDay1.



## A VISIT TO GOSHEN WITH CARDINAL DOLAN

On Friday, September 24, 2021, His Eminence Timothy Cardinal Dolan visited two Orange County schools alongside Superintendent of Schools Mr. Michael J. Deegan. Cardinal Dolan began the day by presiding over the morning Mass at St. John School. He then walked over to bless Burke Catholic Academy, a new middle school program that allows for students to attend sixth to eighth grade on the campus of John S. Burke Catholic High School.



*Cardinal Dolan prepares for the school Mass alongside altar servers at St. John the Evangelist Church.*



*Cardinal Dolan waves to the community gathered together in the church.*



*Coffee break! Cardinal Dolan enjoys donuts offered by the staff at St. John School with student ambassadors Regan and Joshua.*



*Now arrived at the campus of John S. Burke Catholic High School, the Cardinal takes a few moments to greet a few young admirers.*



*Cardinal Dolan is formally greeted by President John Douthit of Burke Catholic.*



*The day ends as the Cardinal blesses and inaugurates the new Burke Catholic Academy.*



To learn more about Burke Catholic Academy, which represents a re-imagining of Catholic education in Orange County endorsed by Cardinal Dolan, Michael J. Deegan, and the Burke Catholic Board of Trustees and Administration, scan the QR code or visit [bit.ly/3vOZs4u](https://bit.ly/3vOZs4u)

# HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

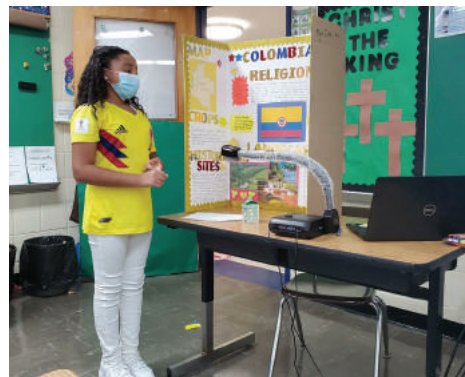
This year, Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of New York celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15, 2021, to October 15th, 2021. Since 1988, Hispanic Heritage Month has honored the rich histories, cultures, and contributions of Hispanic Americans who trace their roots back to Spain and Spanish-speaking countries in North America, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean.



Second grade artists at Santa Maria School in the Bronx learned about Frida Kahlo and the ways she represented Mexican culture through her art and actions.



St. Patrick School in Yorktown embraced Hispanic Heritage Month through a dress-down day that encouraged Latin American dress.



After researching Latin American countries, students at Christ the King in the Bronx put their minds to work on presentations showcasing their newfound knowledge of Hispanic culture.



At Our Lady of Victory School in Mount Vernon, first graders created Hojalata art for Hispanic Heritage Month. Hojalata art is a colorful style that became popular due to the wide availability of tin in Mexico.



After reflecting on what heritage means, the seventh grade class at Immaculate Conception School in Tuckahoe celebrated their diverse cultural backgrounds.



St. Eugene's eighth grade religion class wrote reports on the contributions of Hispanic Catholics and their impact on Church history.



Schools throughout the Archdiocese of New York used the hashtags #HispanicHeritageArch and #TradiciónHispanaArch to share some of the creative ways they celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month.



To visit ADNY Catholic schools' webpage featuring highlights of Hispanic Heritage Month, scan the QR code or visit [catholicschoolsnys.org/hispanic-heritage](https://catholicschoolsnys.org/hispanic-heritage).



## PRINCIPAL SPOTLIGHT: *HELENA CASTILLA-BYRNE*

### PRINCIPAL OF OUR LADY OF VICTORY SCHOOL IN MOUNT VERNON, NY

As a teacher, I used to have a sign above my desk that said, “A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove... but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child.”

I went to Catholic school my whole life. As a child, I attended Immaculate Conception School and then St. John’s Prep in Astoria. Afterwards, I received my As, Bs, Ms, and a 2nd Ms at St. John’s University, where I am now completing my PhD studies. I was a Catholic school teacher for 16 years and have been a Catholic school principal for 12 years.

My Catholic faith played a critical role in my decision to become a principal. I realized that if I was a principal, I could make a difference in the lives of many children and those children would make a bigger impact on the world we live in. This faith is the cornerstone of my leadership. I look to my staff to see their God-given potential and their gifts for the common good.

The driving focus of my leadership is how I can help others. Throughout the day, I try to practice discipline, love, and patience. I work to spread the Good News daily and cultivate a school community that is always loving and welcoming. I encourage my students to see the world and help it in a positive way. I incorporate prayer into our daily life, through such tangible ways as hosting Zoom prayer as a school community to using technology like Jamboard for the students to post their special intentions.

The safety of our students is an ongoing and utmost priority. Throughout the last year, my staff worked tirelessly to keep our school community united and engaged through socially distanced, completely virtual, or hybrid school events. This summer, we worked hard to prepare our building to open safely in September and keep our families up to date with the latest information. Now that the school year has begun, I’m glad to embark upon my favorite part of the day again: entering the building and saying hello to my favorite students!

*“Faith is the cornerstone of my leadership. I look to my staff to see their God-given potential and their gifts for the common good.”*



Principal Castilla-Byrne smiles for a photo with students, circa 2020



Principal Castilla-Byrne oversees a classroom at Our Lady of Victory School

## PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE: **FATHER ANTHONY DOMENIC SORGIE** PASTOR OF IMMACULATE CONCEPTION AND ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY IN TUCKAHOE, NY

I am a very proud product of Catholic education, having attended St. Theresa Parochial School in the Pelham Bay Section of the Bronx; Cardinal Hayes High School in the South Bronx; Immaculate Conception College in, Douglaston, Queens; and St. Joseph's Seminary in Dunwoodie. When Cardinal Cooke sent me to Columbia University to begin my doctoral studies in music and music education, it was the first time I had stepped foot into a non-Catholic school since kindergarten at PS 71 in the Bronx.

On the day I was awarded my doctorate in 1989, my father asked me, "Anthony, did you finally finish school?" It had been 29 years since kindergarten. I didn't have the heart to tell him that day, that I could be in school teaching at St. Joseph's Seminary for a long time. In fact, I stayed in Catholic education until 2000, at which point I became the pastor at both St. Benedict's in the Bronx and St. James the Apostle in Carmel, NY.

Catholic schools have played a vibrant role in my 20 years of shepherding large Catholic communities. Even now in my current role as pastor of Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Our Lady in Tuckahoe, NY, I credit my Catholic education for shaping me and guiding me towards my vocation.

I take seriously that the pastor cannot be just a landlord, but must be a father to all of the children and the faculty and staff. The school here at Immaculate is now regional and it presents some challenges. In my case I have children from 25 different zip codes, an equal number of parishes, and some non-Catholics. Taking into account this diversity, I try to plant seeds of unity and community wherever I can. Thankfully, Immaculate Conception School is striving and thriving as we crawl out of the pandemic.

My parochial vicars and deacons and I are involved in every liturgical and religious exercise involving the school and the children. We make every attempt to make all students feel like they are part of the global Catholic Church and part of a superlative education of mind, body, and soul in our Catholic schools.

*"Catholic schools have played a vibrant role in my 20 years of shepherding large Catholic communities."*



*Fr. Sorgie preaching at St. Patrick's Cathedral on Columbus Day 2021*



*Fr. Sorgie and Cheryl Parinello, Parish Bookkeeper in the New Parish Center*



## RESPECT LIFE WEEK

Every October, Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of New York celebrate Respect Life Week. Through lesson plans and classroom discussion, students were encouraged to reflect on the value of life through the lens of immigration issues, elder medical care, and more. The theme of this year was “Human Dignity.”

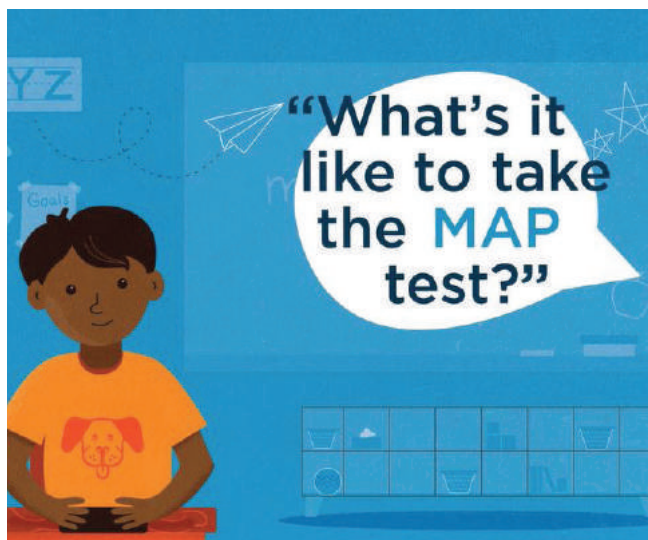


As part of the Respect Life curriculum, young students at St. James the Apostle School learned about the role of marriage and the family. After watching the nativity story and reflecting through discussion and prayer, the Pre-K 3 and Pre-K 4 class drew pictures of their families.

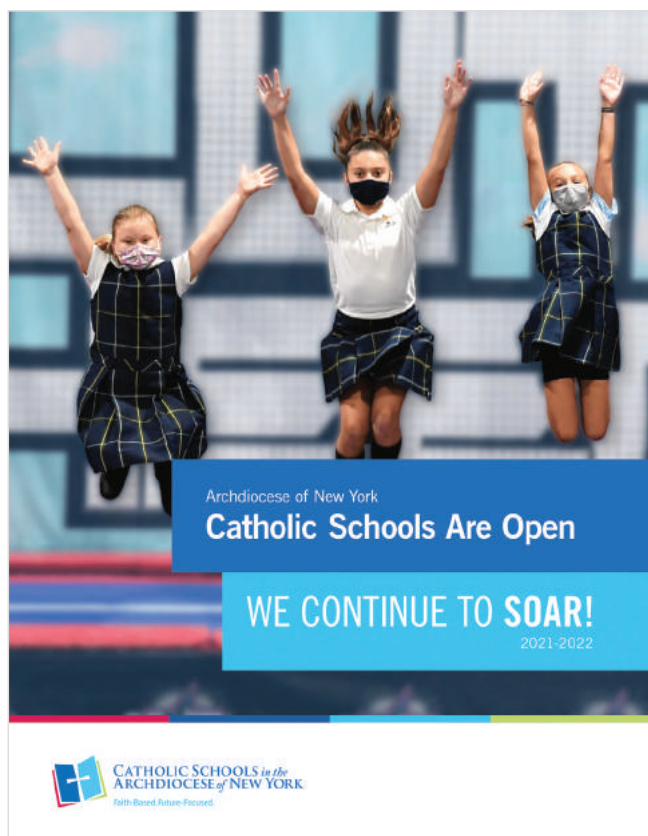


To check out lesson plans for Respect Life Week 2021-22, scan the QR code or visit [archny.org/ministries-and-offices/respect-life/respect-life-week/](https://archny.org/ministries-and-offices/respect-life/respect-life-week/).





To view the NWEA Map Family Toolkit, scan the QR code or visit [nwea.org/the-map-suite/family-toolkit/](https://nwea.org/the-map-suite/family-toolkit/).



To view the 2021 Opening Plan, scan the QR code or visit <https://bit.ly/3mkzQcD>.

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