

ST. PAUL CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

March 17, 2020

A Gaelic Blessing for St. Patrick's Day

*May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be at your back,
May the sun shine warm on your face,
The rain fall softly on your fields;
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.*

(Author Unknown)

Good afternoon!

Trust you and your family are well. Happy St. Patrick's Day! Today's blessing is timely and brings a new perspective for us. As we begin to transition to online learning tomorrow, Wednesday, March 18, I wanted to clarify a few concerns that have arisen.

It was originally announced that St. Paul Catholic High School would be closed through March 27. However, Gov. Lamont issued an executive order on Sunday closing all schools in the State of Connecticut through March 31. The Archdiocese of Hartford followed by announcing that all Archdiocesan high schools and parochial schools will be closed through March 31 and all Masses cancelled through April 3. It remains to be seen if schools will reopen at the end of the month.

As I said yesterday, while our highest priority is the health and well-being of all members of our St. Paul community during the spread of COVID-19, we are also committed to delivering on our promise to you. After over a week of preparing and training for this school closure, I am incredibly proud and inspired by the enthusiastic response of our faculty in creating, under Mr. Cooper's leadership, a meaningful and supportive distance learning plan in order to meet our student's educational needs.

Following Mr. Cooper's letter last evening, teachers have begun to contact their students to explain respective online classroom instruction as well as other alternative learning options. For the majority of students, this has been well received. We recognize that the steps we are taking are unprecedented and will create some inconveniences and maybe even frustration. But again, I ask both students and parents for your patience and trust in the process.

We expect that there may be some upfront hiccups with our Zoom application or using your personal technology from home. However, we are flexible and prepared to support you. Along with giving our faculty sufficient time to effectively plan their online courses, this is one of the reasons we intentionally shortened this instructional week. We believe the next three days will give you sufficient time, without overwhelming you, to understand student expectations and eventually be comfortable in the transition to distance learning.

We are doing our best to create an online plan that simulates in-person classroom instruction while recognizing some classes are more conducive to this change than others. Your teachers will work through that with you.

Last night, we received a light dusting of snow. Today was your snow day. **Tomorrow is not!** From our perspective, we are treating this online plan as instructional days to be counted toward the 177 days required by the Archdiocese of Hartford for the 2019-2020 school year. Whether or not that actually happens though is up to you. Given the range of distance learning experiences being offered by various schools, the Archdiocese of Hartford has indicated that we will need to document and defend our online learning program later this spring. That will include providing teacher lesson plans, student engagement and measurable mastery reports, etc. in determining if we satisfactorily met our learning objectives for the year. **Bottom line, if we are successful in implementing this plan then these online instructional days will count. If not, they won't.**

Let me take this one step further. If you as a student do not take this online learning seriously or are not fully engaged and don't successfully complete the work required for the course then the consequences will be no different than in-person classroom learning ... you risk receiving an incomplete/failing grade and possibly no credit for the course. Students who are sick or absent from online classes are required to make up missed work. If you are continually disrupting the online learning process for others, then you can expect to receive appropriate consequences including the possibility of a suspension on your high school record. Hopefully, we're not having that conversation with anyone.

I know there are many questions and few answers at this time. We will continue to do our best to keep everyone informed in the days and weeks ahead.

High schools and colleges across the nation are transitioning to some type of distance learning. It has become the "new normal." Some plans will be more advanced than others, some will be more successful. Some institutions will soar while others might sink. This is not easy work and will necessitate the mature commitment and unwavering partnership of everyone involved: students, parents, and teachers.

I speak on behalf of the administration and faculty when I say, we are committed to soaring but whether we get off the ground or not is up to YOU!

So get up tomorrow morning, make your bed and let's get started. Together, we can do this!

In the Spirit of St. Paul,

Cary M. Dupont '72
President/Chief Administrator

