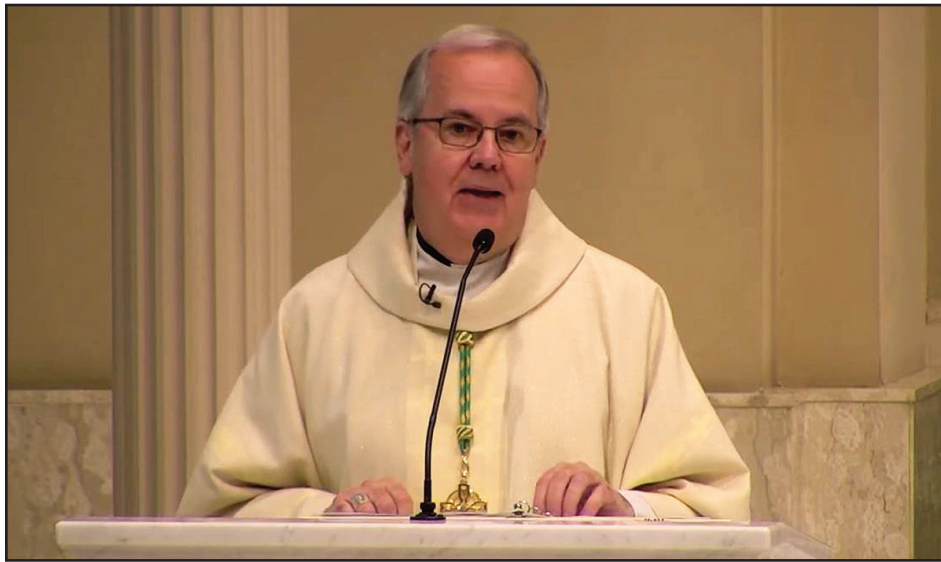


During troubled times, turn to Jesus, Bishop Bambera tells Catholic school students



Bishop Joseph C. Bambera delivers the homily for a virtual closing Mass for students at various Catholic schools across the Diocese of Scranton. The bishop reminded the students that Jesus remains with them at all times. (Photo courtesy: Catholic Television)

SCRANTON – While the school year ended in a very unusual way, eighth grade students, their families and educators, were able to enjoy a little bit of normalcy as they were invited to gather together in prayer.

Before graduating and moving onto high school, eighth grade students were given a link for a virtual closing Mass celebrated by Bishop Joseph C. Bambera.

The Diocese of Scranton Catholic Schools Office and Diocesan Office of Communications collaborated to produce the Mass, incorporating the bishop celebrating Mass with students from various Diocesan schools conducting individual readings, offering prayers and singing various hymns.

During his homily, Bishop Bambera congratulated the students, parents and teachers for adapting to the challenging circumstances of the coronavirus. He also acknowledged many milestone moments, including concerts, field trips and sporting events had to be cancelled because of the coronavirus.

“What should we do when we find ourselves faced with all of these difficult and confusing things? Should we worry? Should we give up? Should we be afraid? No. Absolutely not,” Bishop Bambera said.

The bishop encouraged students to look for answers to those questions in the Gospel of Saint Mark.

During the closing Mass, the Gospel message of Jesus and his disciples crossing the Sea of Galilee was proclaimed. During

a huge storm, the disciples, who were fishermen, realized they needed someone far more capable to calm the wind and waves and bring everyone to safety.

“They turned to the only one who could help, Jesus,” the bishop told the students.

During his virtual homily, Bishop Bambera explained to the students the same message applies now during COVID-19.

“Boys and girls, we’re like those disciples in the midst of that storm right now. We wonder if we’ll make it through these difficult times. We wonder if things will ever get back to normal, if school will ever be like it was before, if we’ll be safe,” he said.

The bishop asked the kids to remember what the disciples did during the storm.

“They turned to Jesus, who was right with them, in the midst of the storm. When they were humble enough to say ‘Lord, we can’t do this anymore by ourselves,’ that is when Jesus calmed the waters and brought them to safety,” Bishop Bambera said.

As he sent them off to enjoy the summer months, the bishop reminded the students to never forget that Jesus is with each one of us at all times.

“Ask him, every day, to help you. He will. That’s his promise,” the bishop said. “He’ll be with you in good times and difficult moments. He will watch over us with His great love and concern. He did that for His disciples and he promises to do it for me and for you!”

Financial fallout from pandemic, recession hurting Catholic schools nationwide

CLEVELAND (CNS) – More than 100 Catholic elementary and secondary schools nationwide are expected to close by the fall, largely because of financial challenges resulting from the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting economic recession.

“Nearly every diocese probably is facing a closure. While we don’t have it in stone, we think the closures as we speak are 100 to 150 schools,” Mary Pat Donoghue, executive director of the Secretariat of Catholic Education at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said June 12.

Sister Dale McDonald, director of public policy and educational research at the National Catholic Educational Association, said information collected by her organization points to the same number of school closures.

Announcements of closings at the end of the 2019-2020 academic year from diocese and archdioceses illustrate the challenge facing Catholic education: 10 in the Archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey; five in the Diocese of Camden, New Jersey; three in the Diocese of Pittsburgh while four others will merge into two; two in the Diocese of Sacramento, California; and at least six in the Archdiocese of Boston with more expected.

Margaret Kaplow, public relations manager at NCEA, said June 12 the association had compiled information showing that at least 97 schools are closing. The number is based on official announcements, media reports and conversations NCEA officials have had with diocesan school superintendents, she said.

Education leaders expect more announcements of closures in the coming weeks as parents who have lost jobs under the shutdown of large portions of the economy because of the pandemic decide they can no longer afford Catholic school tuition.

“A lot of people (in education) are holding their breath that families may not be able to swing it or choose not to swing it in a time of uncertainty,” Donoghue told Catholic News Service.

“Everything is in such a state of flux,” Sister McDonald agreed. “A lot of schools still don’t have their (enrollment) information together. The registration period and re-registration is late March to April, when they ask you to commit again. That didn’t happen. In addition is the whole tuition piece with people unemployed.

“Parents want to know what they’re coming back to. They don’t know that yet. And the schools don’t know that yet,” she added.

The NCEA’s annual statistical report of Catholic elementary and secondary schools for 2019-2020 showed there were 6,183 schools with 98 schools consolidated or closed. Enrollment for the academic year stood at more than 1.7 million.

Catholic school enrollment peaked in the early 1960s with more than 5.2 million students in nearly 13,000 schools.

The focus of the USCCB Catholic education secretariat and NCEA is on keeping schools open.

“For the parishes, the loss of a school is the loss of vitality. This is a huge concern especially as the nation goes through so much upheaval as it goes through the pandemic and the killing of George Floyd,” Donoghue said.

The most difficult questions remain for blue collar and low-income families, which have been the most seriously affected by layoffs.

Donoghue credited federal aid under a pair of emergency relief bills passed early in the federal response to the pandemic-caused economic crash as helping some schools stay open. She said the Paycheck Protection Program in particular, which allowed small businesses and schools to receive forgivable loans to keep employees on staff for up to eight weeks, “probably will keep the number of closures from being worse than it is.”

The USCCB and NCEA also have been advocating within the Department of Education to ensure that provisions for school aid in the \$2.2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act, are carried out, Donoghue said.

In addition, educators are urging Senators to include a provision in any future emergency aid legislation that would provide direct assistance to families for tuition expenses or tax incentives that can be used for tuition. Donoghue said either provision would assist parents in keeping their children in nonpublic schools.

“We’re certainly doing everything we can to shore up the ability of parents and families to stay connected to the Catholics schools,” Donoghue said.

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The Diocese of Scranton is committed to educating our students in an environment that is academically excellent and facilitates the development of moral judgment and Christian decision-making. We are proud to share the following successes of our students in the classroom and in their service to others. Each day, our schools are fulfilling their mission of preparing today's youth and young adults to become tomorrow's faith-filled leaders.



During STREAM week, second graders at **Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary School in Wilkes-Barre** had to use their problem solving and critical thinking skills to “Escape Second Grade.” Their teachers designed five worksheets and when completed correctly, the student would be given a mystery item to pack for their escape. Once all items were packed – sunglasses, a beach towel, sunscreen, book, and water bottle – the students were rewarded with their “Escape Second Grade” certificate.



Kindergarten students at **Saint Jude School in Mountain Top** recently celebrated their graduation. In this photo Reagan Seiwel poses with mom Jennifer and brother Livio.



Gillian Idhaw and Benjamin Mulvey, eighth grade students at **La Salle Academy in Jessup**, were recently awarded scholarships from the Carbondale Trinity Club. Students were selected based on their academic excellence and community service. Each \$500 scholarship will be used to further their education at a Diocese of Scranton Catholic High School.



Holy Redeemer High School in Wilkes-Barre



Rocco Rinaldi, the Class of 2020 Valedictorian at **Saint Clare/Saint Paul School in Scranton**, shares his remarks at the school's Graduation Mass.



Mrs. Joan Dowd, a teacher at **Holy Rosary School in Duryea**, celebrates her retirement after 42 years of teaching in our Catholic Schools by receiving a proclamation of “Mrs. Dowd Day” on June 6, 2020, an outdoor parade in front of the school, and a serenade of “Sweet Mrs. Dowd” by her second grade class.



Jillian Brennan, a student at **Holy Cross High School in Dunmore**, has been named the 2020 Noreen Delaney Memorial Scholarship Award recipient. The Noreen Delaney Scholarship has been created to honor Mrs. Noreen Delaney, a member of the faculty and Chair of the English Department at both Bishop O'Hara and Holy Cross High Schools.



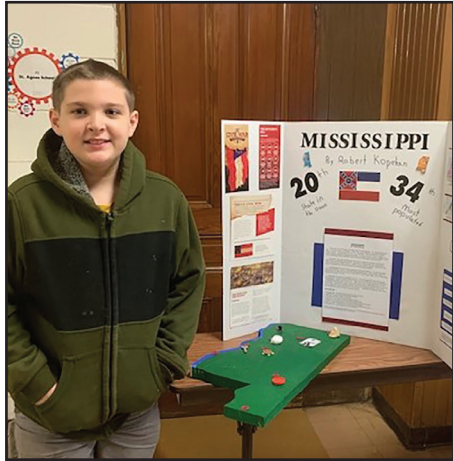
Miss Carole Snyder recently retired from **Holy Family Academy in Hazleton** after teaching for 43 years in the Catholic School System. Miss Snyder is presented with an engraved bell from principal Jason Tribbet.



With more than 1,000 votes for teachers in 60 different school districts, Mrs. Jennifer Jones and Mrs. Janet Lyons, teachers at **Good Shepherd Academy in Kingston**, both earned enough votes to be in the top 10 of the “Quaranteacher Appreciation” contest, hosted by the Mueller Family McDonalds. Each of the top 10 teachers received a gift basket and free McCafe coffee for a year.



Band members at **Wyoming Area Catholic School in Exeter** recently performed an end of year band concert under the direction of Mr. Mark Stansky, band director. Pictured are Vincent Contardi, Benecio Carpentier, Brandon Renfer, Connor Pribula, Samantha Renfer, Martha Goffredo, Ethan Matechak, Robert Stanchak, and James Bullock.



As part of a distance learning project, Robert Kopetan, a fourth grade student at **Saint Agnes School in Towanda**, studied and presented on the state of Mississippi.



Bailey Reilly, a senior at **Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School in East Stroudsburg**, adds some decorations to her car prior to her graduation ceremony at Pocono Raceway.



Molly Fox, a second grade student at **Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School in Dunmore**, uses her fist to find the size of her heart.



The fifth grade students at **Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green** were challenged to create something that moves using simple machines. The pictures above feature some of their creations.



The eighth grade class at **Monsignor McHugh School in Cresco** celebrates its graduation with an outdoor ceremony attended by family, friends, community supporters, and alumni.