

Diocesan Catholic Schools working on safe reopening plan

SCRANTON – With the end of August quickly approaching, the Diocese of Scranton Catholic Schools Office is diligently working on a plan to reopen its school buildings in a safe and prudent manner.

The Diocese says its goal is to reopen for in-person instruction this fall in a way that, above all else, prioritizes the best interest, safety and health of all students, faculty, staff and school families.

The Diocese has developed a Diocesan Health and Safety planning committee which is comprised of diocesan and local school administration and clergy along with medical professionals with expertise in pediatrics and quality assurance.

“The overarching goal of our Diocesan Health and Safety committee is to minimize the risk of the spread of coronavirus, while also promoting healthy habits for our students and school families,” Jason Morrison, Chief Executive Officer and Diocesan Secretary of Catholic Education, said.

At the same time, the reopening strategy will also include planning for the ever-changing dynamic of the virus. A subcommittee has been developed which is focused on enhancing distance learning should there be a statewide closure again. Additionally, the Diocese is looking into the logistics of a virtual offering if there is a desire or need for families to have this option.

“Understanding the fluid nature of this disease, we are charged with making decisions now based on the most recent scientific evidence available through our local, state and national agencies and associations,” Kristen Donohue, Superintendent of Catholic Schools, said. “Our commitment is to keep students, families and staff informed and assured that each decision will only be made with the best interest, health and safety of all.”

While COVID-19 has taken a lot away from people, and this year students will not be sharing items like normal, the Catholic School System says there is one thing it wants students to share – good health.

As a result, the Diocese will be producing a series of videos entitled, “Sharing Good Health,” which will help lay out the reopening plan.

The first video was released this week and featured five fundamentals that will be commonplace at all 19 Catholic Schools throughout the Diocese. They include daily temperature checks, promoting proper handwashing and good hygiene, physical distancing measures, wearing face masks and additional cleaning and disinfection.

“Classroom spacing is being developed to ensure physical distancing. That will also apply to hallways, cafeterias and even recess for our youngsters,” Donohue said in the video. “Access by visitors and volunteers will be limited and only considered when absolutely necessary.”

In an effort to promote good

hygiene and a healthy environment, students will also be permitted to wear “summer uniforms” throughout the school year. Each school will provide further details of the summer uniform policy. The goal of that change is to make sure clothing items worn by students are properly washed and don’t become a carrier for any type of virus or disease.

During the first “Sharing Good Health” video, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera also thanked families for their commitment to Catholic education.

“This coming year will require the best of each one of us – and I know that by working together – we will be able to conquer any challenge that we face,” Bishop Bambera said.

To view the “Sharing Good Health” video, visit www.dioceseofscranton.org/Catholic-Schools.

Diocesan Health and Safety Committee

Cathy Chiumento, M.S.
Vice Principal of Holy Cross High School

Eric Deabill, B.A.
Diocesan Secretary of Communications

Kristen Donohue, M.Ed.
Superintendent of Catholic Schools

Kathleen Gilmartin, M.S.
Associate Superintendent of Catholic Schools

James Jones, M.S.
Principal of Good Shepherd Academy

Katherine Lincoln, D.O., FFAFP, FACOFP
Wound Care Specialist, Chair of Clinical Quality Care Committee at Guthrie Hospital and Parent

Michele Long M.S.
Associate Superintendent of Catholic Schools

Jason Morrison, M.B.A.
CEO/Diocesan Secretary of Education

Monsignor Thomas M. Muldowney
Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia

April L. Troy, M.D. M.P.H.
Board Certified Pediatrician and Pediatric Regional Education Coordinator for Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine and Parent

Sharing Good Health: Five Fundamentals

Our goal is to minimize the risk of spreading COVID-19

1) Daily Temperature Checks

Temperature readings will be required daily for every person entering a school building. Any student or staff member who is ill will need to stay home.

2) Promoting Proper Handwashing & Good Hygiene

Proper handwashing and using hand sanitizer will be stressed upon entering a building or classroom, before and after lunch and at the end of the day. Uniform policy will be altered to the summer uniform so that clothes can be laundered daily.

3) Physical Distancing Measures

Classroom spacing is being developed to ensure physical distancing. Emphasis will also be placed on distancing in hallways, cafeterias and at recess (if applicable). Visitors and volunteers will be limited to keep germs from spreading.

4) Masks will be Required

By Order of the Pennsylvania Department of Health, students will be required to wear a mask except when eating or drinking.

5) Cleaning and Disinfection

Every school will increase the cleaning of classrooms, common areas and frequently-touched items including door handles and counter tops.

School policies must be flexible in responding to new information or guidance from federal, state or local officials.

Holy Redeemer Class of 2020 celebrates graduation at PNC Field

THE CATHOLIC LIGHT • JULY 16, 2020

MOOSIC – The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may have thrown a curveball into traditional graduation plans for students at Holy Redeemer High School but it didn't result in a strikeout.

On Wednesday, July 8, the Class of 2020 officially graduated at PNC Field, receiving diplomas after traveling down the first-base line and crossing a stage set up near home plate.

"I'm a softball player so I think it's pretty cool that we get to graduate on a baseball field. I'm okay with the way things turned out," graduate Meredythe Baird said. "We did miss out on a lot, that's the nature of the (COVID-19) disease."

A total of 114 students received diplomas during the 75-minute ceremony. In order to follow recommended guidelines for social distancing, graduates sat in several rows between the first-and-third base lines.

Graduate Joseph Delaney, who plans to go onto Mansfield University and study sports communication, was excited when he first learned that he would be graduating at PNC Field.

"I grew up at the baseball field learning things about sports, always wanting to become a commentator, and even doing little league color commentary at times. It's definitely going full circle for me," the 18-year-old student said.

Delaney admits he didn't even know what graduation would look like at first during the height of the coronavirus.

"This year has been crazy. Honestly, it's a little surreal that we're finally able to graduate because it has been a rollercoaster of emotions," he said.

While admitting that he was excited to get to see the Class of 2020 on the big screen at the stadium, Delaney said the most important thing was that his classmates got to come together one last time.

"We had surveys. They kept asking us 'what do you really want,' and the main thing I said is we wanted it to be in



Members of the Holy Redeemer Class of 2020, located between the first-and-third base lines, participate in a Commencement program on July 8, 2020, at PNC Field in Moosic.

person, we wanted to be with everybody," he explained.

Holy Redeemer principal Doreen Dougherty said administrators worked extremely hard to listen to what was important to both students and families.

"We did four separate Zoom conferences with all of our seniors invited to participate. We then had four separate Zoom conferences so all of our parents and guardians had the opportunity to weigh in as well. The input from those conferences helped us develop a survey to our senior class and invited them to finalize their thoughts as far as what they wanted Baccalaureate and Commencement to look like," Dougherty said.

In addition to graduation being a special occasion for students, Dougherty added that it was also special for seven faculty members who retired at the end of the year after decades of combined service.

The valedictorian of the Holy Redeemer Class of 2020 is Brandon Gebenus of Wilkes-Barre. The salutatorian is Marissa Jason of Wilkes-Barre Township. Both

addressed their fellow graduates during the graduation ceremony.

At the beginning of his speech, Gebenus discussed the coronavirus, encouraging his fellow graduates to remain strong, courageous and not be afraid.

"We all will have sad and challenging times to go through. The important thing is for us to stay strong and to keep faith in God's love for us. We must allow God to guide our actions here on earth so we can make the world a better place and so we may somebody share eternal happiness with God in heaven," he said.

As a graduating class born in the aftermath of the 9/11 terror attacks, Gebenus stressed the Class of 2020 is destined for greatness because of the values learned at Holy Redeemer.

"We are a graduating class that knows now more than ever how much the world needs unity. We are a class that knows the importance of involvement in social, church, and community services. We are a class that knows we each have the responsibility as citizens of the United States of America

to exercise our right to vote. We are a class that knows we have the power to help end racial discrimination and lead the efforts to combat disease, poverty and climate change," he added.

During her salutatorian address, Jason looked towards the future but also reflected on her high school experience.

"Holy Redeemer teaches far more than academics. In that building, you learn kindness, faith, altruism, and how to have a little fun in class. Holy Redeemer has provided us with the academic, social and spiritual tools we need to thrive," she said.

At the conclusion of the graduation ceremony students got to participate in the traditional cap toss because administrators ordered each student a second cap that wouldn't need to be retrieved so that no one intentionally broke social distancing guidelines during the pandemic.

"It's not every day you get to have a graduation at a place like this," graduate Jack Daoud of Wilkes-Barre said. "We're just blessed!"

Daoud plans to study architectural engineering at Penn State in the fall. He said he was excited to graduate at PNC Field. While he is a Mets fan, not a Yankees fan, he said that didn't dampen the excitement.

"I remember growing up, playing baseball, how much fun I had. It's awesome it came full circle and I get to graduate here. It's definitely a unique experience," Daoud added.

Following their high school career, a total of 99 graduates will be attending a four-year college or university, including 35 who will be pursuing higher education at a Catholic college or university. Eight students plan to attend a two-year college, four will enter the work force and three will be entering military service.

The Holy Redeemer Class of 2020 received a total of 474 scholarships, earning more than \$26 million.



Graduates walk into PNC Field to begin their Commencement ceremony.



Despite social distancing guidelines, Holy Redeemer graduates were able to participate in the traditional 'cap toss' because the school ordered two caps for each graduate.



Graduate Caitlyn Blaum receives her diploma from Bishop Joseph C. Bambara.

Diocese of Scranton
CATHOLIC
SCHOOL SYSTEM
FAITH • ACADEMICS • SERVICE

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.



Class of 2020 eighth grade graduates from **All Saints Academy in Scranton.**



Class of 2020 eighth grade graduates from **Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School in Dunmore.**



Class of 2020 eighth grade graduates from **La Salle Academy in Jessup.**



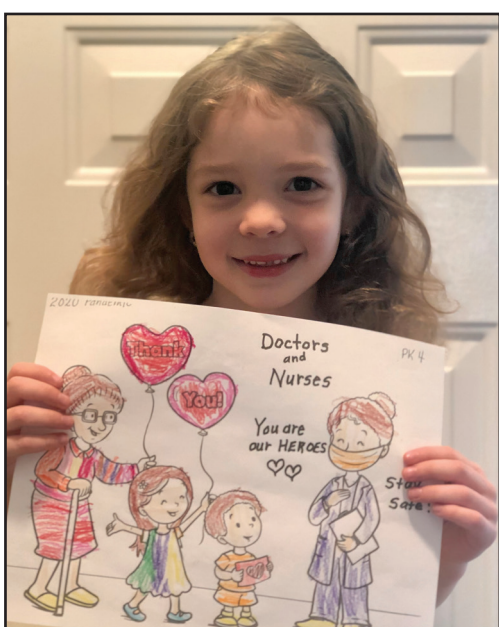
Eighth grade student Stephen Renfer celebrates his graduation with a school parking lot parade after the ceremony at **Wyoming Area Catholic School in Exeter.**

Seniors at Holy Cross High School in Dunmore are preparing for their graduation activities with their Baccalaureate on July 19th and Commencement on July 20th.





Earlier this year, students at **Saint Agnes School in Towanda** learned how hard it is to be a living statue.



Good Shepherd Academy in Kingston



Students from **Epiphany School in Sayre** share their stained glass chalk drawings as part of the school's weekly Facebook Challenge.



Under the guidance of their teacher, Mr. Dan Banicky, 45 seventh and eighth grade students from **Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green** participated in the Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science (PJAS) competition. Thirty of those students earned 'First Awards' that would have advanced them to the state competition at Penn State University had it not been cancelled this spring.



Addisyn and Zane Wolfe, students at **Saint John Neumann Elementary School in Williamsport**, say hello to their principal, Mrs. Alisia McNamee, at a school hosted drive-thru parade. Mrs. McNamee and the teachers greeted families and delivered treats to the students.



After months apart, students at **Saint Clare/Saint Paul School in Scranton** are looking forward to being back together again so they can capture moments like this from Catholic Schools Week 2020.



Lester and Eileen Kempinski, recently retired teachers at **Saint Jude School in Mountain Top**, pose with their sons and granddaughter as they were honored at a drive-by "retirement parade." Eileen and Lester taught at Saint Jude's for a combined 89 years. Eileen taught for 45 years, while Lester taught for 44 years.