



PROVIDENCE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Providence Family,

Happy Valentine's Day! Happy President's Day! Happy Mardi Gras! Happy Snow Day! I think that covers everything!

I know that the pandemic drags on, and people are starting to show wear and tear. Quick to anger...decrease in patience ... exhaustion...less ready to give each other the benefit of the doubt. These are all symptoms of frustration and fatigue, and I can't say that I blame anybody. We are expending all kinds of energy in employing our coping skills, and we simply get tired. Snow and cold weather only add to the emotional heaviness.

What can we do? Pray! Exercise. Take a walk. Schedule time to relax by reading a book or watching a movie or playing a game. Call a friend. Do something nice for somebody, particularly by contributing to a charity with a donation of cash, clothing or food---take the focus off of the "self" and reach out to somebody who is in greater need. With the distribution of the vaccine there is finally light at the end of the tunnel. Let's persevere and allow each other a bit of space, forgiveness and understanding during a very trying time.

Let me provide an update for the things we are planning at Providence.

Celtic Energy - Friday, February 26th: By all accounts Providence Catholic has done an excellent job in addressing academics during a pandemic. Just before Christmas a committee was formed to address the social, emotional, physical and spiritual needs of our students. On Friday, February 26th, we will unveil "**Celtic Energy**" for the senior class. On that day **all** of the seniors will be on campus. (Further information on the juniors, sophomores and freshmen is forthcoming). In the morning the seniors will participate in groups of 50 in a rotation that will include Mass, presentations on college, diversity and stress relief. The day also includes non-academic meetings in smaller groups with some of their teachers, as proposed by Senior Student Council Representatives. Lunch will be served, and the afternoon will see several workshops offered. The workshops may be practical (career choice, how to balance a checkbook and plan finances, self-defense, introductory first aid), health-related (yoga), artistic (dance, music, theater or creative writing) or athletic (badminton or volleyball). More information will be sent to our Seniors this week.

National Honor Society: On March 20th we will initiate the newest members of the N.H.S. and distribute the traditional stole to the senior members. We are planning 8 sessions; 40 students per session. Parents may participate in an on-campus live-stream into the Commons or small gym. Parents of Junior and Senior N.H.S. students will receive further information later in the month.

We are a Diocesan School: I have heard the frustration expressed in questions like, “Why can’t everyone return to school now?” and “Why can’t we have more than 50 spectators when athletics return?” All of us at Providence want to get back to normal, as soon as possible! Our decisions are in line with the Diocese of Joliet, who owns the school. We are subject to the higher authority of the Diocese, in a unique way compared to the other schools. (As an example, Benet Academy is also a school within the Diocese of Joliet, but has a greater amount of independence as a Benedictine school---it is not a Diocesan school). The Augustinians administer Providence Catholic in the name of the Bishop in the Diocese of Joliet. Administrative decisions, particularly involving COVID, follow the guidelines of the Diocese of Joliet.

Baccalaureate and Graduation: At this time, NO decisions have been made about Baccalaureate and Graduation! The Rialto Theatre has informed us that, for the foreseeable future, they will limit their events to 50 participants. If their decision continues into May, we will be unable to hold graduation there. We hope to plan a celebration that includes the entire senior class, following the guidelines of the Diocese of Joliet and the Center for Disease Control. We will keep open ALL OPTIONS, including an outside Mass and/or graduation in the stadium, until such time a clear determination can be made. We’ll keep you informed.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday (Tomorrow!): The Lenten season is a time for retreat, during which we as Christians take inventory. By prayer, fasting and works of charity we prepare our hearts for the glorious celebration of Easter. Here are the Church directives for keeping Lent:

- Abstinence from meats is to be observed by all Catholics 14 years old and older on Ash Wednesday and on all Fridays of Lent.
- Fasting is to be observed on Ash Wednesday by all Catholics who are 18 years of age, but not yet 59. Those who are bound by this may take only one full meal. Two smaller meals are permitted if necessary to maintain strength according to one’s needs, but eating solid foods between meals is not permitted.
- The special Paschal fast and abstinence are prescribed for Good Friday and encouraged for Holy Saturday. By the threefold discipline of fasting, almsgiving and prayer, the church keeps Lent from Ash Wednesday until the evening of Holy Thursday.
- All of the faithful and the Catechumens should undertake the serious practice of these three traditions. Failure to observe any penitential days at all or a substantial number of such days must be considered serious.

Thank you, Providence Families, for your cooperation, help and support in all things necessary for the success of Catholic education in a year of pandemic. You and your intentions are kept close to my heart every day!

Happy Lent!



Fr. Merk