

Keeping the religious life of the school alive in changing times

March 2020

Ideas for whole school prayer – when the whole school can no longer gather in the one place.

- ***Utilise technology to pray together.*** If classes are rostered on to lead prayer at assembly, keep the roster going, but ask the class to lead prayer with their own class. This could be videoed and shared with other classes, or video conference into that room (Alternatively the roster could be broken down into year levels, for example, all year 7 classes share a roster for leading prayer and each year 7 class joins the video conference link to pray with the class leading, at the appropriate time. So, we're still praying together but in our own spaces).
- ***Draw on the Christian story of Easter to provide students with a sense of hope.*** The death of Jesus on a cross was a complete tragedy, a scandal, a time of fear and loss of hope for the followers of Jesus. Yet the stories of those closest to Jesus permeated through the community. After a time of isolation and fear, those closest to Jesus began to experience his presence still with them, in some way. We'll never know exactly how as all 4 Gospel authors record varying stories, but we do know that whatever happened transformed people from despair and fear to hope and a sense of purpose. Make no mistake, a terrible death had occurred, and it was preventable. Jesus was misunderstood and labelled as someone who was a troublemaker for the Roman leaders. From this historical time comes the Christian belief that nothing is too bad that God's love can't break through. No time in our lives will ever be so dark that God's light can't break through. So where do we see God's light breaking through in our world already?

In the planet, as the environment shows noticeable changes.

The waterways in Venice have cleared. Here are twenty one more good news stories and some more inspirational stories from everyday life across the world.

One idea: Create a 'hope' roster in your school. Each day one class is selected to find an image, a story, a word or phrase that helps promote hope during this time and create a powerpoint slide that can be shown to the whole school (could be at the start and end of each day). Rule: every class needs to come up with a statement that includes the word 'God', so that we do not end up with a resource that students in a Government school could have also created, because we clearly link theology with life. Some possibilities: Day 1 – an image of the cross. Wording on the powerpoint: We remember that even in the most difficult times, God's love will still shine through in some way. Day 2: a story and photo of someone doing an act of kindness for another. Wording on the powerpoint: God gives kindness as a free gift – we can freely give kindness to others. At the end of the week the whole powerpoint could be replayed to keep focus on positive things happening in our world.

- ***Promote prayer as something positive we can all do in the midst of this uncertain time.*** We don't know exactly how prayer makes a difference but Christians believe that it does. In the isolation of our own classrooms we need to be praying for the needs of those all around the world and promoting the notion that our prayers are making a difference, somehow, in some way. As students in a Catholic school, we have a gift we can bring to the world and it's called prayer. We could also have a daily prayer roster – where classes are rostered to name people, situations that we are grateful for, and people, situations they want the whole school to pray for. The class could send an email to the APRE at the end of each day to say what they want the whole school to pray for tomorrow, and the APRE can put this into a format for everyone. We pray in gratitude today for doctors all around our world. (Everyone in each class pauses and prays silently in their hearts in thanksgiving for the wonderful service these people provide.) We pray for the needs of the elderly in our community, who may feel alone and unsure. (Everyone in each class pauses and prays silently in their hearts for the elderly). Leader: God of love, we don't know how our prayers make a difference but we believe that they do. We offer these prayers today knowing that will help people somewhere in our world, and make a difference. We make these prayers through Jesus, our source of hope. Amen.

- **Create a pilgrimage** that classes could do around the school. Identify sacred spaces, objects, iconography that points to the Christian story that is the fabric of the charism of your school. Create a roster for teachers to choose a time when their class will participate in the pilgrimage so that each class is guaranteed that space for themselves. Some possibilities:

Station 1: The large cross in the centre of our outdoor area.

Invite students to stand / sit in a circle around the cross.

Listen: Provide a 1 minute overview for students: "The cross reminds us that life can be extremely difficult sometimes, but God's love is always with us, and amazingly good things will still happen even when life is tough. The cross reminds us that love conquers fear."

Dialogue: 2 mins to share with a partner their ideas about what this cross means to our community. Three minutes to share thinking with the whole class.

Reflection and prayer: 2 mins of silent time to tell God what this cross means to you, and listen to what you think God wants to say to you about the cross.

Record: On a special card, write a few words / phrases about the meaning the cross holds for you, at this point in time. (Students could add illustrations to these cards when they go back to class and bind them together in a special way, so that they become something valuable to keep, especially with the possibility of learning needing to take place at home. When anxiety hits, these pilgrimage cards could provide students with hope and deep spiritual insights to help them feel a sense of hope and strength. This is a gift the Catholic identity of our school offers.)

Station 2: Stand / sit in front of a key object / icon / painting that represents the charism and story of your school.

Listen: "Our school name places Mary at the centre of our story. We remember Mary as a person who lived with fear and uncertainty at different times in her life. When she realised she was going to have a baby and she was unprepared; when she realised that her son was going to be crucified. We remember Mary as a person who helped the early Christian community after the death of Jesus, when people gathered together to pray, break bread and share all they had with one another."

Dialogue: 2 mins to share with a partner their ideas about what the story of Mary means to our community. Three minutes to share thinking with the whole class.

Reflection and prayer: 2 mins of silent time to tell God what the story of Mary means to you, and listen to what you think God wants to say to you through this time.

Record: On a special card, write a few words / phrases about the meaning the story of Mary holds for you, at this point in time.

Ask teachers to take a photo of a couple of cards from each class, that show insightful thinking and deep meaning from students. These could be put together as a school ebook; powerpoint; digital patchwork 'quilt'; and shared with each class, on the school newsletter and perhaps the parish newsletter / school website. Add a caption such as, 'When times are tough, we can find strength and inspiration through our school story. Here's what some of our students have taught us:'

- **Keep social justice alive by utilising creativity and technology.** If your school has been partnering with an organisation who looks after homeless or the elderly, contact them to see if there is a way that people the students would usually visit could be videoed (share their story; give the students some wisdom for coping with the times ahead...). There are ways of staying connected to people without having physical contact. Students could create email messages of support; send prayers of support and send a photo to show how those people are still part of their lives at school. Other ideas include writing letters of support to grandparents or elderly people living alone; writing thank you letters to your local hospital workers or any other ideas students think of that would demonstrate solidarity with others and compassion.

For more information
Religious Education
Learning Services



More than
11,500
People

Supporting
142
Schools

Transforming
75,000
Students

