



THE NEWMAN SCHOOL

March 17, 2020

Hello Newman Parents

Patty and I hope everyone is bearing up under these unusual and challenging circumstances.

I am in contact with you so I can convey a few thoughts regarding our school's work toward establishing effective online learning during the coming weeks. On the afternoon of March 17 as I compose these thoughts, we don't have any certainty regarding when regular class meetings can resume at Newman. So we're planning for the long-term, believing that a strong foundation will serve our students, our families, and our entire community well in the future, even after the current crisis has been resolved.

As you certainly know, our school motto, Heart speaks to heart, is also that of Cardinal Newman. This little expression forms the basis for our mission. In starting any new program, it is critical that an independent school such as ours begins by carefully considering its mission and culture.

Dr. John Crosby of Franciscan University Steubenville has written extensively on Cardinal Newman and the school of thought known to contemporary scholars as "Personalism." Crosby connects two ideas prevalent in Newman's thought.

First, Crosby notes that Newman's "Personalism" meant that he saw "each of us is a whole and independent being, and that to Newman it was true that there was no one else in the world like us. Newman felt intensely the truth of our individual uniqueness and Newman

expanded upon its implications thus: We would "loathe existence if we could not be known in our incommunicable personhood."

Crosby continues by connecting Newman's strong belief in the individuality of each person with the critical importance Newman ascribed to the role of the teacher. "You may learn the general principles of any field by reading books at home, but the detail, the color, the tone, the air, these things that make the subject live in us, you must learn these from someone in whom the subject is already alive." Only through interpersonal dialogue involving teacher with students and students with one another, could ideas and knowledge be deeply and widely explored.

In developing an online learning system for Newman School, its teachers and its students, we hope to keep your perspective as parents at the forefront of our thinking. We believe that you chose our school because at Newman we attempt to live out our daily experience with these principles of Newman in mind. We value each individual student, we respect the interaction between students and teachers, and we celebrate the culture of learning that exists within the classrooms and halls of the school.

As we develop our online learning program, we will seek to continue to honor these values as being basic to the experience of the students and teachers. Tomorrow morning at Newman (and online) we're convening a meeting of key school personnel, both teachers and administrators, to further the work begun before vacation. We have the necessary tools: an online learning management system, Managebac, which is well-established at Newman and supported by various learning tools such as Kognity and other systems our teachers find valuable, and either Zoom or Google Meet (we'll keep

testing both of these for a while). Classes on Monday and Tuesday March 23 and 24 will probably be brief, providing time for student login, brief “get-oriented” lectures by teachers, and short assignments to be completed on the same day. Attendance will be taken. Students should have cameras “on” for the entire class, and be constructively involved. Faculty members will be spending the balance of both days in training. By Wednesday we hope to be up and running with full schedules.

Newman wrote a beautiful little poem, popularly known as “Lead Kindly Light,” which seems quite appropriate at this moment. “I do not ask to see the distant scene, one step enough for me.”

We’ll be reporting to parents and students regarding specific procedures. Expect that we’ll be revising our process as we go along. There will be a system for parent input, as we’re interested in gaining your own insights regarding your kids’ experience. More on all of this as we move forward. We intend to report further to you by this Friday March 20.

Thank you, and I hope you and yours are well!

Harry Lynch

