

Dear Cardinal Newman Students, Families and Community Members,

When I first came to the Diocese of Santa Rosa, the following quote from Cardinal John Henry Newman, priest and theologian, was posted on Cardinal Newman High School's website as a partial description of the school's goal and purpose:

“Knowledge is one thing, virtue is another; good sense is not conscience, refinement is not humility, nor is largeness and justness of view faith. Philosophy, however enlightened, however profound, gives no command over the passions, no influential motives, no vivifying principles. Liberal Education makes not the Christian, not the Catholic, but the gentleman. It is well to be a gentlemen, it is well to have a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid, equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life; - these are the connatural qualities of a large knowledge; they are the objects of a University; I am advocating, I shall illustrate and insist upon them ...”

When I read those words, I said to Dr. John Collins, then Superintendent of Catholic Schools, that this did not sound like Cardinal John Henry Newman. So, I searched for the original passage and found the rest, which continues with the word ‘but’:

“...but still, I repeat, they are no guarantee for sanctity or even for conscientiousness, they may attach to the man of the world, to the profligate, to the heartless, - pleasant, alas, and attractive as he shows when decked out in them. Taken by themselves, they do but seem to be what they are not; they look like virtue at a distance, but they are detected by close observers, and on the long run; and hence it is that they are popularly accused of pretense and hypocrisy, not, I repeat, from their own fault, but because their professors and their admirers persist in taking them for what they are not, and are officious in arrogating for them a praise to which they have no claim. Quarry the granite rock with razors, or moor the vessel with a thread of silk; then may you hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend against those giants, the passion and the pride of man.”

Cardinal Newman, now a Saint, understood that man is weak, sinful, fallible and that a healthy dose of God’s grace is the only remedy for this condition. As he notes, education and being a “gentleman” is a wonderful quality but an external gentlemanliness is not a guarantee of sanctity.

Laura Held, President of Cardinal Newman High School in Santa Rosa since 2014 has partnered with me in bringing this understanding more fully into the heart of Cardinal Newman and I am grateful to her for her cooperation with me in this effort. During her six years at Newman, Laura Held has faced enormous challenges including most notably the partial destruction of the School in 2017 in the Tubbs Fire and this year the COVID-19 pandemic. Both myself and the Board of Trustees are grateful to Ms. Held for her leadership in these times of crisis. At the same time the present challenge of rebuilding both physically and spiritually, while already begun, now requires a change in leadership to more fully engage with the School Community as well as the broader Community of Santa Rosa and Sonoma County.

Dr. Linda Norman, Superintendent for Diocese of Santa Rosa Catholic Schools, will assume temporarily the role of Interim President of Cardinal Newman and will help guide the search process to find a new president. Dr. Norman, a career Catholic educator, brings experienced leadership to the position, having served as a Catholic school teacher and principal before assuming her duties as

Superintendent in 2016. Dr. Norman shares my vision and hope to bring Catholicism more fully and more vibrantly into the very heart of Cardinal Newman High School.

I am assured that Dr. Norman will engage the entire staff of Cardinal Newman High School and will help assure that they continue to provide the best educational experience for your students. This they have already demonstrated in past and in present challenging times. The mission and purpose of Catholic education is forming disciples by finding God in all things. As Cardinal Newman notes “human knowledge and human reason” are keen but delicate instruments and without faith and grace they lack the power to manage “the passion and the pride of man”. Dr. Norman recognizes that a renewal of faith, hope, and charity, as well as poverty, chastity and obedience is needed in the world, and it will come through the young people who are formed in these virtues. This formation is hard work and it begins with making sure that every faculty member recognizes that they, too, must fully embrace these virtues if they are going to be effective in transmitting them to the young men and women at Cardinal Newman. We must fully embrace a quest for sanctity!

I am extremely grateful to Dr. Norman for her willingness to undertake this important, albeit temporary, placement and I am assured that she will give herself to the duties with unreserved selflessness and sincere love.

Asking every good grace and blessing of God upon all of you, I am
Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Robert F. Vasa, Bishop of Santa Rosa