

**May 26, 2020**

Dear Friends of Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School,

Graduation day (May 29<sup>th</sup>) for the Class of 2020 will be unique. In fact, the entire four-year experience at Cristo Rey for the Class of 2020 was unique. They survived the last three years in our original campus, and they were the ribbon cutters for our new campus at 1717 W. Allegheny Ave. – but then, they had to finish school from home in the COVID shutdown. They initiated more clubs and teams (drama, volleyball, baseball, Latinx Student Organization and more) than any prior class. They led very competitive teams in robotics, boys' and girls' basketball, soccer and track. And, of course, all of them earned admission to a four-year college.



**You can watch the virtual graduation of these special students, live on Facebook and YouTube at 8 pm on Friday.** In fact, Cristo Rey Philadelphia is hosting a live event at 8 pm each night this week for our Virtual Senior Week. *(See end of newsletter for more information and links.)*

None of us had any idea, when we left school on March 13<sup>th</sup>, that we wouldn't come back. Plans were in the works for spring sports, prom, senior week, graduation, Kairos, student government elections, the spring play, spirit week and robotics competitions. Nevertheless, on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, the school and the students were back to business in a new paradigm.

Initially, there was flurry of urgent care for Cristo Rey families and students, including our graduates in college. As usual, you, our faithful investors, supported this work quickly and generously.

Once again, Cristo Rey students proved themselves to be resilient and adaptable.

The COVID shutdown forced a new normal for graduating senior Rose Barreto. She misses her busy schedule being “involved in everything at school,” but she is grateful for the opportunity to focus on other important priorities: “family, exercise, healthy eating, and checking in on friends.”

Rose told me that as a freshman, she, like most of her classmates, “needed to believe in herself” and “needed lots of encouragement from others” to build confidence. She received plenty of encouragement from the Cristo Rey community and at the end of her junior year, Rose was elected President of the Student Government Association. When I asked if she had advice for other students, she said: “hold your own ... be a consistent friend ... avoid drama ... be cool with everyone.” Rose added, “I am proud that I took networking to another level with everyone I met!”

Rose has enrolled at Loyola University New Orleans. She liked their family atmosphere and their “Cristo Rey focus on *cura personalis*.”

For senior Jaheim Aiken, the COVID shutdown was “hard at first” and “a little lonely.” He said “managing time became my responsibility ... I had to rely more on myself and less on teachers or coaches to tell me what to do and when to do it.” Most of Jaheim’s neighborhood friends didn’t have any school assignments, so he needed to self-motivate to stay on track with his Cristo Rey responsibilities. He misses his basketball and track teammates and afternoons in the gym. The citywide shutdown has closed almost all basketball venues, so Jaheim “works on his cardio” by running outside.

Jaheim became a good student and a good athlete at Cristo Rey. He had good college options, but he had not made his college decision when the shutdown went into effect. Fortunately, College Counseling and his coaches helped with scholarships and gave advice during the shutdown. Eventually, Jaheim chose Immaculata University. “Immaculata is a great school for Cristo Rey graduates ... they seem to care for me as a person ... and I like the basketball coach and players that I’ve met so far.”

*Last week, Cristo Rey faculty and staff delivered caps and tassels, yard signs, congratulation letters and more to the Class of 2020. Students, families and the Cristo Rey team were thrilled to celebrate together in-person briefly, while following all social distancing guidelines.*



*Rose Barreto, Class of 2020, will be attending Loyola University New Orleans.*



*Jaheim Aiken, Class of 2020, will be attending Immaculata University.*

Naturally, we are very proud of Rose and Jaheim and all of their classmates. The Class of 2020 has overcome many forms of adversity, and we believe that their resiliency and confidence will serve them well in college and beyond. Most importantly, they have learned to make good friends with each other and with many, many others in the vast Blue Pride community. They have lived the mantra of our school, and I believe they have adopted it as their own:

**We believe. We dream. We lead. We serve.**

Sincerely,

John McConnell  
Founder and President

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**TUNE IN THIS WEEK!**



# CLASS of 2020

virtual senior week

tuesday, may 26<sup>th</sup>

**Hindsight: Looking Back**

wednesday, may 27<sup>th</sup>

**Insight: Looking Forward**

thursday, may 28<sup>th</sup>

**College Signing Day 2.0**

friday, may 29<sup>th</sup>

**Graduation**

**Stream at 8PM EST each night**

**Live** on facebook and youtube / streaming on instagram  
@cristoreyphiladelphia



## LINKS TO JOIN:

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/cristoreyphiladelphia/live/>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/CristoReyPhila>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/cristoreyphiladelphia/channel/>