

## Holy Name of Jesus School

I recently heard a wonderful young priest call himself a “radical centrist.” In some ways, I think of myself that way. I’ve always been pretty good at finding the merits (and the faults) in both sides of an argument. I believe strongly that difficult problems will not be resolved without pooling together the best ideas from opposing sides.

I have come to feel this way about how we should behave in the midst of this Covid crisis. On the one hand, I don’t think that most of us should hide away in a cave for 8 months. On the other hand, it would be foolish not to exercise simple precautions and to go even further than that during the times and situations in which the virus becomes more dangerous. Though it is far from ideal, I’ve been pleasantly surprised how well we’ve managed to proceed with the Sacraments in safe ways through the use of masks, distancing and so on.

It is time now to find creative ways to educate the children of Holy Name of Jesus School. On the one hand, it would be reckless to open the school year “as normal” without taking precautions. On the other hand, there is good reason to believe that children can go to school without grave danger from Covid. And depriving children from in-person schooling and from socializing with peers is a very serious matter. If possible, we should leave it up to the parents to make the all-important decisions for their children. To that end, HNJ School has carefully pieced together a plan that would allow for the parents to choose between in-school-learning and guided-home-learning.

Our new principal, Kirsch Wilberg, has led the faculty and staff through a careful discernment about how to open the school in the safest possible way, using guidelines from the archdiocese, CDC, Department of Health, and from local, state, and national health officials. To give a few examples of their procedures:

- Daily temperature checks will be conducted for the faculty and staff.
- Students will be met at the cars in the morning and will be temperature-checked and interviewed before being allowed to exit the vehicle.
- Students will report directly to their classroom and will seldom interact with other children outside of their class. There will be no large, crowded gatherings.
- Within the classroom, students will remain in “pods” and will be socially distant from those who are not in their pod.
- Detailed plans are in place for mask-wearing, distancing, sanitizing and isolating.

Any family who feels it is unsafe for their child to attend in person may choose the second option of guided-home-learning. Teachers will provide the parent with the materials that will be taught in the classroom that week. Parents will return to the teacher written assignments, quizzes, etc. The teacher will grade the child’s work and the child will be given a report card, just the same as if they were physically at school. This is beauty of this second option: **every HNJS student will be fully-enrolled in the school whether they are able to attend physically or not. And the choice is entirely the parents’.**

These are only a few of the many plans, procedures and protocols now in place. I am deeply impressed by the thoroughness by which Ms. Wilberg and her faculty and staff have

designed the reopening. They seemed to have thought of everything! No doubt, adjustments will have to be made. And we must be prepared to tighten or loosen our restrictions based on the evolution of the disease in our country and in our locality. But I believe that the school has done all that it could to provide for these two options for the students' education this Fall. I am optimistic that our students will learn well, grow closer to Christ and have a lot of fun through it all. Let's all pray for our parish's most important ministry of forming happy, healthy, holy and smart children of God.

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