

Dear Parents,

Like all of my colleagues, one of the big reasons I became a teacher is because I love being with teenagers. They are so full of life and energy, goofiness and good questions, and they are just malleable enough that I can still feel like what I'm saying and doing might be making an impact on them. (I know that as a parent of teens it can seem like they are more interested in listening to anyone else other than me!) That is one of the many things that has made these past 6+ weeks so challenging – we all miss being with our students!

As just one sign of that, on Monday (during what was planned to be a “day off”) we asked for faculty and staff members to volunteer to help us hand out graduation materials to the Class of 2020. We were overwhelmed by the response of so many of our colleagues wanting to be part of it – to have the opportunity to see our seniors. We will, of course, practice good safety measures and abide by all guidelines to ensure good health and social distancing. I hope and trust that the seniors will enjoy some of the small surprises that we have in store for them – but I'm sure that the biggest joy for them will be the chance to see their teachers in person rather than via a screen. (Senior parents – an email was sent out on April 29th at about 10:45 p.m. to your son about what he needs to do and the 10 minute window when he is scheduled to arrive.) For those students who come to campus driving over the Hedding Street overpass, they will see the billboard below.

One of the reasons why I have been missing our students so much is because of what goodness and creativity they bring to the world. Tanish Chettiar '22 was concerned about how the pandemic is impacting families who do not have enough to eat. He talked to his parents and rallied his fellow distance runners on the track team to organize a sort of “walk-a-thon” (or run-a-thon in this case) to be sponsored for every mile they run in a given week, and donate that money to support our virtual food drive that just ended yesterday. They are extending that effort this week to support BELLSGIVE - especially those students for whom Bellarmine provides daily breakfast and lunch. If your son would like to participate, he can reach out to TANISH. Thanks to the efforts of people like Tanish, the leadership of our amazing Christian Service team of Steve Pinkston, Anne Maloney, Shawn Descourouez and Thomas Dines, not to mention the support of so many of you, we significantly surpassed our goal and raised enough money to provide more than 30,000 meals through Second Harvest Food Bank! Members of the Agape Club and their families made over 90 sandwiches for Loaves and Fishes this week, which were delivered by a partner organization that was setup to deliver this needed food safely. Aditya Indla '22 has raised more than \$8000 through a GoFundMe campaign to raise money for PPE. Max Amend '22 has been rallying members of the community to record themselves playing music that can be shared with the elderly and others who are unable to have visitors. In a similar vein, Jacob Wang '21 wanted to be able to share the amazing work of our percussion ensembles with those who would have been able to come see them at their Spring concert. Jacob did an awesome job of editing together their work. I highly encourage you to view and listen to them HERE.

While we are in awe of how our students and staff are being resilient in meeting the challenges of the day, we are also looking forward with hope and anticipation to what is

ahead. We are already planning (and contingency planning) for what school will look like in the Fall. What we do know is that we'll be starting on August 17th. What we don't know precisely yet is what exactly school will look like at that time. We are committed to providing in-person instruction to the greatest extent possible – possible being defined by what is allowed by the county and state authorities, and how we can keep everyone as safe as we can. We are thinking about social distancing, robust cleaning of our facilities, how to provide food safely to our students, and many other items, as you would imagine. Daily temperature checks and masks may become the new norm – at least for a time. We also want to be able to meet the needs of those in our community who might be immunocompromised and therefore may not be able to be as physically present on campus as they have been historically. Whatever we do, we are committed to providing an outstanding Jesuit education, one that seeks to form the whole person, and which is committed to cura personalis – care for each person as an individual. We have a team of outstanding, creative educators who are planning a variety of options for what school will look like in the Fall, and we will be glad to share that with you as the picture and what is permissible becomes clearer.

Speaking of the Fall, I'd like to remind returning parents that deposits for the 2020-21 school year are due by May 13th. You can pay your deposit [HERE](#). We know that the environment in which we find ourselves at this time is economically challenging, and we are committed to doing all that we can to ensure that your son is able to continue at Bellarmine. If you need special consideration, please note the options mentioned in the email you received from Jamon Osby in our Business Office on April 23.

I am so encouraged and impressed by the parents who have shared with me about what a blessing it is to have dinner together each night during this time. I'll also admit that hearing those stories has made me a little jealous, because my own family has not been able to gather together every night, and there are times when I feel like I'm not doing enough as a father. But what I have been trying to do - and I would encourage you to do the same - is to focus on the good family moments that we are experiencing together, which I know are more than would otherwise have been the case, and which I know I'll miss dearly when my kids head off to college. As I wrote to you last month, I believe that joy is a choice, and as best I am able, I am choosing to be grateful and joyful for the light that is all around us even during these dark days.

Thank you for everything that you are doing to encourage and support your sons, and please let me know if there is anything we can do to support you further at this time.

Sincerely,
Chris Meyercord '88
President