



March 26, 2020

OLMC Update: Day #10 School Closure

Dear Our Lady of Mount Carmel School families,

I have dreaded writing today's email. I knew it was coming; however, the tiniest hope in me lingered... today, I will address many difficult issues for our OLMC community.

When I sat down to my computer, I received a few communications that seemed to be blessings to give me courage, and I want to share with you:

Yesterday, Pope Francis tweeted:

The first requirement for prayer is faith, the second is perseverance, and the third is courage. In these days when we need to pray more, let us ask ourselves if we pray like this. The Lord never deludes! He makes us wait, but he never deludes!

Caring for OLMC

Compared to many of you, I am a relative newcomer to OLMC. Nonetheless, I feel deeply committed as Principal and as leader to care for the Students, Faculty, Staff, Parents, and Friends of OLMC. (I care for the beautiful historic buildings also.... but that is not my focus these days...) I feel the immense pressure that all of you are feeling since March 12th when we closed school.

With only whisperings of warnings that schools may close in response to COVID-19, my team of educators transformed OLMC education into a distance learning platform serving 302 children from 3 to 14 years old. Simultaneously, parents transformed homes into OLMC SchoolHouse at Home, home offices, and the only place of refuge for entire families. I hear you loud and clear when you write to me about the challenges and pressures that you face. I feel deeply for all parents who are now working from home while also trying to teach and supervise 1, 2, 3, and 4 children at the same time. I feel for all parents who have *essential* jobs, who must leave the safety of home and entrust others in the care of their children, so that they can undertake their professional responsibilities. I feel painfully for those of you who have shared that you no longer have a job to go to. Trust me, this weighs heavily on my heart.

Like all of you, I am juggling the pressures of taking care of our students and their education while also meeting my commitments and obligations to care for my team of educators. This is tough, and yet I feel that many of my strengths and experiences have prepared me for making the best of this unprecedented historic global event.

OLMC Commitment

I make the following commitments to you:

- It is more critical than ever for us to come together as a community through this unprecedented time as we face new realities. *I am committed to lead a united OLMC community.*
- It is essential to ensure the continuity of quality Catholic education for our 302 students. *I am committed to lead the team of OLMC educators to provide an education that supports students' academic, social, and spiritual formation.*
- It is vital that OLMC is fully operational, only in a different format that we are used to. *I am committed to leading the many moving parts that make the OLMC school community a place of educational excellence. I am committed to anchoring myself to the OLMC community for whatever lies ahead. I am committed to ensuring that OLMC comes out of this experience more resilient, better equipped to educate our children, and stronger in our collective faith.*

OLMC Tuition

Many of you have contacted me about tuition:

- Your inability to pay.
- Your concerns that you are not getting *value* for your tuition.
- Your generous offers to donate to support families in financial hardship.

The Archdiocese of San Francisco and OLMC have made a commitment that Faculty and Staff will continue to educate, and thus our educators will continue to receive their salaries to ensure uninterrupted education for our students. By honoring our commitments, OLMC will continue to incur operational expenses and will incur additional unexpected expenses, especially in the area of lost income from our endowment, tuition that goes unpaid, and planning for increased financial assistance for the upcoming year.

Continuity of tuition payments is essential in covering our expenses and keeping OLMC operational, and thus tuition agreements will remain intact. For those of you who can continue your tuition payments, thank you. For those who need to adjust or freeze your tuition payments, please contact me and know I am in solidarity to support you through this.

Please know that the OLMC Parish Finance Council, OLMC School Board, the OLMC Finance Working Group are all working on these financial challenges.



School Schedule Update

You all have heard the multi-county – including San Mateo County – school closure extension announcement that schools will remain closed through May 1st. I sent out an announcement yesterday with our schedule for the coming weeks:

- OLMC SchoolHouse at Home Distance Learning will be open through to noon, Thursday, April 9th. Thursday, April 9th is Holy Thursday, which is the commemoration of the Last Supper of Jesus Christ, when he established the sacrament of Holy Communion prior to his arrest and crucifixion.
- OLMC Easter vacation will begin at noon, April 9th and continue through Sunday, April 19th.
- OLMC school buildings will remain closed through Sunday, April 19th.
- OLMC will resume school on Monday, April 20th. Per the Superintendent's letter (attached here in English & Spanish), we will resume OLMC School in the format that that is consistent with Archdiocese, State of California, and San Mateo County directives.

OLMC Festival

Much like the historic decision to delay the 2020 Olympics for one year, I must sadly announce that we must cancel the OLMC Wild West Days Festival 2020. This is a tough blow to our sense of community and to our vital fundraising needs. The OLMC Festival is tradition that binds our community year after year. The Festival has created memories that span generations. It is also an important source of essential income for the OLMC operational budget. This is a double-edged sword that pierces the very heart of OLMC.

AND NOW FOR THE GOOD NEWS!

OLMC Remains Safe

I have not heard of a single case where an OLMC community member has tested positive for COVID-19. *This is certainly news worth rejoicing!!!*

Contributed Service Hours

Needless to say, parents are more than fulfilling their Contributed Service requirements by supervising their children's distance learning each and every day. In partnership with our team of educators, parents are ensuring that our children are continuing to learn.



The Contributed Service hours requirements are eliminated for the remainder of this year. Thank you all for the many hours that you have previously contributed to OLMC. There are so many ways that our parents and caregivers have contributed to make OLMC a thriving community. Thank you!

OLMC SchoolHouse at Home

I have witnessed on ZOOM and by way of photos and notes that OLMC children are finding fun and engaging ways to continue learning. I have heard about families appreciating the extra bonding time together. I have seen the benefits for our children to slow down a little and savor a different pace of life.

Please send photos and stories to news@mountcarmel.org. By sharing, we can lift each other up during this difficult time.

Daily Mass with Fr. Ulysses

Fr. Ulysses is celebrating virtual daily Mass at noon. Seems like the opportunities for new experiences are endless! This is an excellent opportunity for families to celebrate Mass together and create a moment of sacred grace. Especially with our shelter-in-place during the season of Lent, we are now all slowing down and participating in daily Mass can be a true gift in the silver lining of school closure.

Please join the ZOOM “meeting” for daily noon Mass with this link:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/964030730?pwd=dERHQmJhb1ErNWRMMzlMZGRlM5ZUT09>

- Meeting ID: 964 030 730
- Password: 426313

Helping to our First Responders

Please contribute if you can! The Severin family will lead a very important collection for **N95 masks** in honor of **Sarah Barty**, a first responder and OLMC Mother of Dominic and Nathan. We have all heard about the critical shortage of personal protective gear that our hospitals are facing, and the crisis of this shortage will only grow more severe in the coming days. Please see the attached letter from Kate, Dave, Billy, Ellie, and Burt announcing the drive for N95 masks. We will have a collection bin on the Arcade starting today.

Both Kate and Dave are health care professionals, so they have clearance to deliver the donated items to Sarah and her team. This is a perfect example of how the OLMC Community pulls **together** and is **stronger** because of our faith in the power of Jesus’s unconditional love!



Attendance

Please submit daily attendance by 10am daily with the link below, which is the same for the entire school. If it's easier for you, please call Mrs. McLinden at **650-366-1051** to record your child's attendance.

Daily attendance link: <https://forms.gle/t7Jyqde8bgei7wz29>

It is also posted: <http://school.mountcarmel.org/school-closure>

Pick-up and Drop-off System

I want to clarify the motivation for the pick-up and drop-off system. While technology has created an important and essential bridge for our students' distance learning, many are concerned that our students will spend too much time in front of their ChromeBook or iPad. Faculty are providing hard copies, textbooks, and manipulatives to supplement the technology-driven learning experiences.

Thus, these resources are meant for your benefit to have additional curriculum materials for your child; however, it is also optional.

There are tables out on the Arcade for distribution. Think of this like your grocery shopping: get what you need, drop off what you want, go home and thoroughly wash your hands and surfaces of the materials. Please follow your teachers' instructions to know if you have schoolwork or textbooks to pick-up/drop-off.

We certainly want everyone to remain safe using this system, so please:

- If someone is at the Arcade table collecting their items, please stay back on the blacktop to keep a safe distance.
- Be sure to wash your hands when you return home.
- Feel free to wipe the surfaces with a light swipe of an alcohol-based solution.
- Contact your teacher if you are unable to pick-up/drop-off.

Yard Safety

It is important to have healthy practices of fresh air and exercise. Please be advised that it is best to stay OFF the play structures. Hard surfaces may pose a risk of contamination, so it is best to avoid having your children's hands on these hard surfaces. We are not in a position to be cleaning the play structures or picnic tables.

Caregivers and Grandparents

I am sending my morning announcements to those listed as grandparents and friends of students. If you would like to ADD a grandparent or caregiver's name to our email distribution list, please just email info@mountcarmel.org. We want everyone to be informed and in our circle of OLMC love!

In closing today

This morning I received a piece from *Facing History and Ourselves*. This is a non-profit education organization that I engaged with on many occasions when I was a History teacher. I want to share a passage from “Universe of Obligation” by Rebecca Solnit

. . . When all the ordinary divides and patterns are shattered, people step up—not all, but the great preponderance—to become their brothers’ keepers. And that purposefulness and connectedness brings joy even amidst death, chaos, fear and loss. Were we to know and believe this, our sense of what is possible at any time might change. We speak of self-fulfilling prophecies, but any belief that is acted on makes the world in its image. Beliefs matter. And so do the facts behind them. When it comes to human behaviour in disaster, the gap between common beliefs and actualities limits the possibilities. Changing beliefs could fundamentally change much more. Horrible in itself, disaster is sometimes a door back into paradise, the realm in which we are who we hope to be, do the work we desire and are each our sisters’ and brothers’ keepers.

I believe in the spirit of the OLMC community. I believe in the resilience of our children. I believe in my team of educators. I believe in the enormous capacity for love, strength, patience, and boundless commitment from our parents. I have experienced JOY numerous times in the last two weeks, despite the challenges and fatigue. I have experienced the Holy Spirit embracing our community. I know that Jesus loves each and every one of us unconditionally, and as Pope Francis says: *The Lord never deludes!*

humbly,



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Our Lady of Mount Carmel School