



Volume 4 – Number 3 – October, 2010

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The saying, “This is Cleveland. If you don’t like the weather, wait an hour. It will change” has been especially true this October. There is a chill in the air and the boilers have already been on. Thank goodness they are working well! But then, I may take off the chill and need to open windows as the temperature climbs. Oh, well . . .

As the weather turns colder – or as we experience cold mornings and almost balmy afternoons – please encourage your child to dress appropriately with a coat or jacket in the morning. IF some outerwear items have not made it home this school year, please check our Lost and Found basket. It is amazing how many hoodies, jackets, and sweaters can be found in that receptacle! My favorite lost item was a single shoe (and I assumed the student who lost it, hopped home!)

Students go outside for recess unless it is raining, the temperature falls below 20 degrees, or the playground is unsafe due to ice. When inclement weather forces the cancellation of school, an announcement will be made on Fox 8 News, Channel 5 News, and posted on the Principal’s Page on our website (johnpauliiacademy.org).

The Almanac promises a “mild winter” and I truly hope this will occur. The State will allow us three (3) calamity days this year and NO calamity days beginning in the 2011-2012 school year. Any missed days will have to be made up.

Thank you for your cooperation in helping to maintain safety as you drive your child to and from school. Maintaining safety on the playground under all circumstances is critical! This year has been much better for all of us due to your help.

UNIFORM EXCHANGE

The Uniform Exchange Program was held in July. However, since the start of school, I have received shirts, pants, and some sweatpants and sweatshirts that were lovingly used and quickly outgrown. Before you purchase any items, you might want to check out the “attic stock” at John Paul II Academy. Since these items

are packed away, I would appreciate a call before you come to check what we have. Evenings are probably better since your child or grandchild can try on the clothing. There is no charge for clothing and there are some never worn shirts and pants in stock, too.

PRAESIDIUM PROGRAM

For me to be away from the Academy on two consecutive days is very rare. Personally, I hate leaving the school simply because, to me, it is the best place to be when students are present. However, when I am “absent”, Sister Dolores Sever, a former principal and program director is my substitute and I never worry when she is on duty!

However, I was absent on September 30th and October 1st for training in a program entitled Praesidium. The focus of this program is the safety and education of students and their parents regarding sexual predators and providing both with information about how to recognize warning signs and how to provide children with techniques for refusing and reporting any behavior on the part of an adult or an older child that borders on compromising their personal space, emotions, or behavior.

State Law requires that students are educated in these topics and that schools maintain watchful oversight of adults who may have contact with minors within the schools. (Hence the requirement for Virtus training and fingerprinting of all paid personnel and volunteers, including coaches in the CYO programs.)

The statistics about sexual abuse floored me! The most current stats show that 1 in 3 females and 1 in 6 males under the age of 18 have been sexually abused. Please be aware that I ordered the Praesidium Program Manual and DVDs for John Paul II Academy. When I ordered them I believed I would have to bear the cost but have since applied for a grant to subsidize this program and another one that I’ll explain in a tiny bit –

The Praesidium Program covers the topic of sexual abuse AND THE TECHNIQUES TO PREVENT ANY CHILD FROM BECOMING A VICTIM FROM PRE-SCHOOL (A UNIT FOR PARENTS ONLY) THROUGH THE

TWELFTH GRADE. Once the manual is in, I will offer a “you view it” session (or sessions) for parents, grandparents, and caregivers.

MORE to come once the program is in hand. If you have questions now, please give me a call.

ARE YOU AWARE?

As our students continue existing friendships and establish new ones this year, I encourage you to be aware of what your child is doing online and on his or her cell phone. Many students today use Facebook and MySpace to post information about themselves and others. This information becomes public domain as soon as it is posted.

Along the same lines, students are fond of texting and sending photos electronically without considering the full implications of their actions. Please be aware of a new phenomenon, known as “sexting”, which is the dissemination of nude or partially nude photos via their cell phones. Last year, FBI Inspector William Gang presented an outstanding in-service for students and parents on this topic. Please monitor what your child is doing to ensure that he or she is safe and that his or her actions are not adversely affecting others.

LOCK DOWNS ET AL

As our handbook states, John Paul II Academy regularly practices safety procedures such as fire drills, tornado drills, and various forms of a procedure called a “lock down”. Lock downs can be initiated within the school if an intruder enters the building (or a terribly disruptive student places others at risk) OR if an intruder is seen outside the school building.

These drills can be unsettling for your child initially, but in setting procedures I am very clear that my first and most important responsibility is to keep them SAFE.

All students know that if I use a special phrase, we go into lock down. They know that the classroom doors will be locked to prevent anyone from coming into the classroom. They know that in the event there is any perceived danger outside the school, I will bring all students on the first floor into the hall and that adults will monitor the doors leading into the school. No matter what is going on, they know that I am there with them to ensure they are safe.

For the students in grades K through 2 (possibly 3, depending upon maturity level) the phrase, “hiding from Sister” is used when we practice because I draw the parallel that if I cannot see them, then NO ONE can see them.

Students in grades 4 through 8 are given a more realistic explanation because truth is always better than a contrived story – they know very well what is going on and they know how to be safe.

I will ensure that you receive a note outlining our Lock Down practice with the police (who usually are in

attendance.) NO, I will not ask for volunteers to be outdoor intruders – but if you are in the building, you will need to go into lock down mode, too.

Again, any questions, please give me a call.

OCTOBER 21ST PRAYER SERVICE

Although there will be no Mass on Thursday, October 21st, there will be a special prayer service during which we will honor a number of students for their achievements. The reason Mass will not be celebrated is that the Bishop has convened a priests’ meeting and all priests in the Diocese will be “away” for at least two to three days.

NO, this is not the Honors’ Ceremony. We want to acknowledge our students who played “PeeWee Soccer”, Induct our Student Council Members, and honor a few more students and adults who have no idea that any honors will be conferred upon them. (That is such fun!!!)

IF you can join us for readings, music, prayers, and the celebration of our achievements, please do so. Again – there will be no Mass or reception of the Eucharist. Nevertheless, the Lord will joyfully be among us for all of us are gathered together in His name!

SCRIPTURE DISCUSSION POSSIBILITY

There are Great Books discussions, but sometimes by using our eyes and ears, we can find great things to discuss after viewing something special. Through a grant I have been able to purchase a set of the Nooma DVDs that focus on short presentations based on Scripture and related to “real life.” They will be used with our students in religion classes but also have great possibility for adult discussions, especially when coupled with the reading from Scripture that they portray.

I am very open to coordinating this type of experience for any adult who would like to participate – you do not have to be Catholic to do so. I am also going to open up the discussions to parishioners at Saints Peter and Paul Parish in my role as the parish’s DRE and would love to include folks from Saint Therese Parish in an open invitation as well.

IMPORTANT DATES

October 15	Teacher In-Service Day (for the Diocese) NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS
October 21	Special Prayer Service and honoring of students – 8:30 AM ST Church
October 26	End of Term 1
October 29	Halloween Bingo for students in K through 5; Special suitable programs for PK and for Grades 6 – 8
November 11 12	Parent Conferences 2:00PM to 8:00PM 8:30 AM to noon (NO SCHOOL for students)