



We are called to be the hands and face of Jesus as we learn, love and grow together

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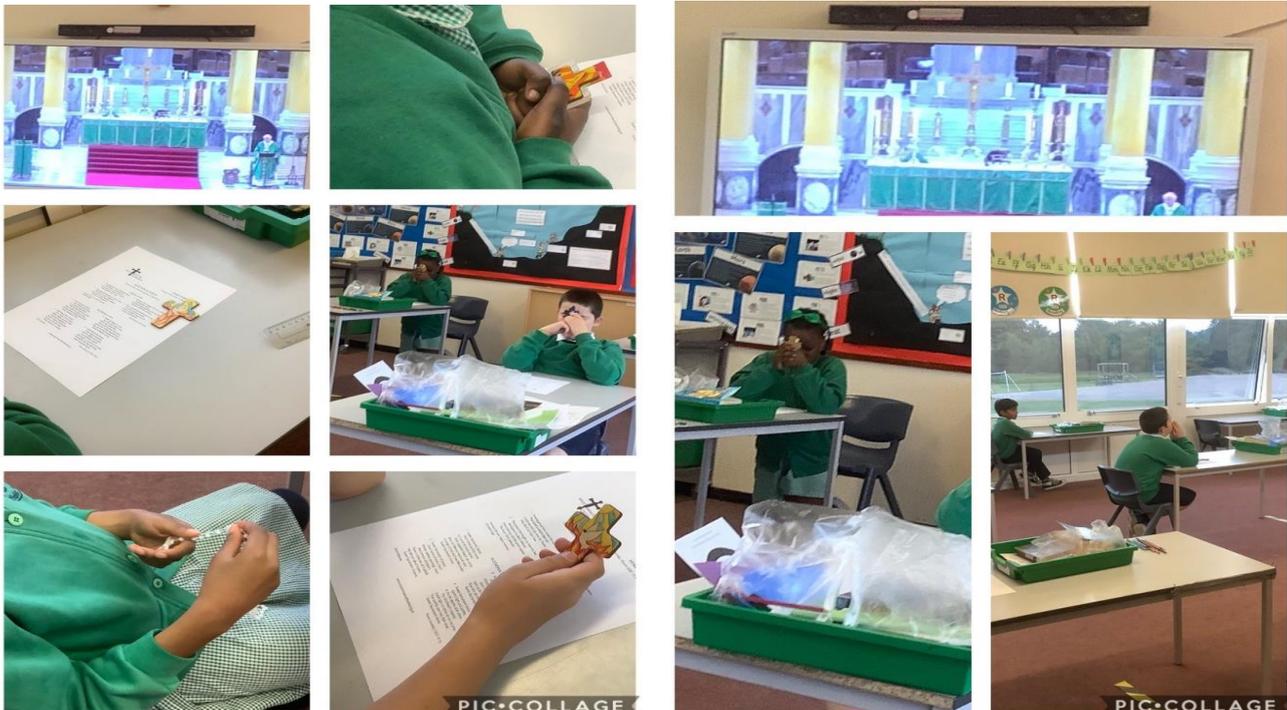
19th June 2020

Dear parents and carers

It is amazing to think that we are now just four weeks away from the end of the academic year. Usually the excitement would be building now as classes busily prepare for those specific end-point markers and rites of passage. Things will of course be very different this year, but we are still working out how to ensure that each child has 'closure' for the year (even if they are not currently in school) and transition to their next class is planned for. This is likely to be a virtual experience as rules governing the protection of the 'bubbles' makes anything other than this rather difficult currently.

Catholic Life

Yesterday many classes throughout the school joined in with Cardinal Nichols' celebration of a Mass for our schools from Westminster Cathedral. The children enjoyed this experience and were very prayerful in their response as you can see from the pictures below. We are all looking forward to being able to join virtually with other Catholic schools in our Deanery as JHN host their annual community Mass in a different format this year. We are all getting so used to new ways of being!



This week also saw the start of a new style of virtual assembly for our children in school. This enabled everyone to join together using a digital platform to share this weekend's Gospel, to sing, to pray and to explore the key messages. I would love to be able to share this live opportunity beyond the school for those at home; however, there are a number of security issues in relation to this which make this impossible at the moment (I'll keep working on it). So that everyone can feel connected, I will use some parts of a recorded version of the live assembly to share in my Vlog each week via our YouTube Channel (which is linked to on our website). This week's assembly can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CesDtoUhsUI&feature=youtu.be>

Black Lives Matter

As you can see, we made some links in assembly between this weekend's Gospel and Black Lives Matter. The school is, as you will be aware, fully committed to ensuring that everyone in our community is valued and treated with dignity, focusing on the key values of equality and respect. We pride ourselves in celebrating the diversity of our community; however, I appreciate that there will be many ways that we can further improve and develop this commitment to our whole community. These will be key aspects that we will address in our new School Development Plan and I look forward to hearing your ideas about how we can achieve this in a meaningful way.

Summer Catch Up?

I know that many of you have been asking questions about what will happen over the summer and what September will look like for your children. There has been much talk of 'catch up' which has not been particularly helpful at this stage – a Summer of catch-up would be neither useful nor effective as everyone needs the space to enjoy their families (teachers and children) without worries and fears about falling behind. Late this afternoon, the Government sent schools notice of its outline plans for a national 'catch up' programme, which will be funded centrally for the following year. We have not been consulted on what might help schools in this task and do not currently have any further details. I know that you will understand that we will be working to ensure that we meet your child(ren)'s needs wherever they are as we always do when we return in September, regardless of the 'catch up' plan. We also look forward to reaping some of the benefits, new skill and interests that you will have developed with your children during this time. We mustn't allow the current rhetoric to negate the great things that have also been happening. As I have said on many occasions, our teachers are very skilled at this and you can trust that, along with their emotional and spiritual wellbeing, this will remain a priority as we all want the very best for them.

Plans for September

In terms of what September will look like, this is hard to predict. However, if the guidance allows it, we will be aiming to get all children back into school as soon as we can. As unbelievable as it may seem, we only get to hear the details of the future plans at the same time as they are released by the Government to all (or when leaked to the press): **contrary to popular belief, we are given no prior notice**. Although we have been working on a number of different scenarios (just in case), we cannot let you know anything about September until the government have made their decisions.



Capital Projects

You will have seen that contractors have been working on site this week. This has been a challenge but has been managed so that the school Covid Risk Assessment is not compromised. It is a strange time for us to be having work done; however, if work didn't start quickly, we would have lost the 90% government funding for this £200K project which we have been bidding for over a number of years. The project will completely renew the hot and cold water distribution system throughout the school and as such new pipework has to be traced through all areas. This will cause us some disruption – next week Bubbles 6 & 7 will be temporarily moving into the KS2 building whilst work is completed in their classrooms. The children visited their new classrooms today and were very excited, feeling very grown up to be in the juniors already! If you have children in these bubbles, you will have been sent instructions about changes to drop off and collection locations earlier today. Changes for other bubbles currently located in the KS1 building are likely in the weeks ahead. Please keep checking your Parent Mails.

Whilst we consider building projects – exciting plans are still underway for a dining room revamp as well as freshening up of the main office reception area and an exciting transformation of the chimney at the main entrance! We'll have a new look in September!

Gifts: Love In Action

As we enter the final few weeks of term, I know that some parents have asked about gifts for staff. I know that our parents are incredibly generous; however, things need to be slightly different this year as we minimise goods (including presents and cards) brought into the school building from outside. This is all part of our Covid Risk Assessment. As such, if you would like to show appreciation for staff this year a simple email would be lovely and would be most appreciated. If you wanted to do anything further a donation to Stevenage Food Bank (via the council offices) or to Caritas Westminster (via <https://rcdow.org.uk/donate/caritas-westminster-donations/>) would be really appreciated.



Both organisations have provided essential and timely support for many in our StVdeP community this year. Your support for their work would make all of us very thankful and would be a wonderful gift of #LoveInAction!

Thank you!



Praying for our families

Our families have all been under great pressure during these past months as the pandemic has affected us all in so many different ways. I have been humbled by your offer of prayers for the school and its work in recent times. Please join with me in praying for all our families.



May God bless you and those most dear to you.

Yours sincerely

Jon White
Headteacher

