



Dear Friends,

How's everyone doing this week? Given what's shown on TV, many folks are chomping at the bit to get out of the house and back to work. I'm sure many of you struggle with this, too. We are of two minds: I want to get back with people and back to work like before; but I'm not sure whether this is a good idea or not. Still, in this tortuous time we've seen some remarkable heroism by ordinary people. We need to identify and praise such people.

I have heard that this week is dedicated to teachers so I would like to give a hearty shout-out to the teachers of our school. The members of our faculty are, in my opinion, remarkable folks. Many have taught at St. Louise de Marillac School for decades. These people have literally given their lives to the children of St. Louise and, in doing so, made an impact on our world.

Beside this dedication, they have gone through some very difficult adjustments just in the time I have been here as pastor. When I arrived as pastor 10 years ago, the school was teetering on the edge. If nothing were done, the school would surely have been closed at the end of that academic year. Working with the Catholic Schools Office, we came up with a plan to save the school, but that plan required a major change within the operation of the school. It was very hard for the faculty to adjust to the new order. But God bless them, they all did make that adjustment.

Several years later we had a change of principal. She brought another major change by slowly introducing Chromebooks and white boards and combined classes. This required the faculty to learn a whole new way of teaching. Again, these wonderful people made that adjustment and actually came to like the new ways. This is true commitment which we need to acknowledge and applaud.

Six weeks ago, another change came with the coronavirus — on-line teaching. Once again, these folks have stepped up to the challenge. They have designed a home school program for our kids and have taught on line. We all can learn a lot about being a servant-disciple from these people.

Sadly, despite all our efforts, our School will close this year. This is so painful for everyone on so many levels. But this closing will bring major changes to our teachers who *are* St. Louise de Marillac School. The closing will profoundly change their lives. Our gratitude needs to turn to prayer for these teachers asking God to support them, show them the way forward and console them by helping them to see the great good they have done over the years. They have provided an excellent foundation for many not only to face the world, but a foundation of how to live a Christian life. Their efforts have made the world a better place.

While it is right and just that we acknowledge the school's teachers, I want to acknowledge the latest group of teachers who've come on the scene for our children...parents.

Picture, if you will, a county sheriff's deputy coming home from a long and hard day looking to relax and unwind. His wife comes home from her job at an "essential service" also looking to sit and unwind. They've left their children (one in kindergarten and the other in 2nd grade) in the care of her mother. "Abuela" (grandma) doesn't speak English so is unable to help the kids with their on-line studies. The two tired parents walk in the door to be met with two kids who need to do their schoolwork. Those of you familiar with the temperament of a red-head, will understand the reaction of our tired deputy as he struggles to help his son grasp a lesson he's not too sure he understands himself. We can watch as his body stiffens, his face turns reddish and his voice goes up a decimal or two. Frustration can do that to a man. His wife, more composed, works with the kindergartner who doesn't want to do anything but play and, being her father's daughter, turns into a spit fire of a girl when Mom insists she does her assignment.

These "neoteachers" should also be praised for doing a second job *they have no training to do*. Parents with high school kids probably have it worse. These are the shut-in "heroes" of this epidemic. They deserve our prayerful support.

COVID-19 invites us all to stretch ourselves in new ways. We've all heard that God works in strange ways and this virus is definitely one. We've been tossed out of our daily routine and the economy has shut down, literally. What are we to make of all this? What is God trying to tell us? Sure, this change of life is tough, but are we just going to be like children who balk at having to study? Perhaps we need to look at the good that's emerged around us, at the fundamental values that have appeared and ask ourselves if we are ready to study how we can make these good things, these fundamental values shape how we live our life. Or we can just become frustrated and throw a tantrum. May the Spirit, the Teacher Jesus sent us, help us learn.

*Fr. Denis*