

## **From Dr. Thomas Burnford, President NCEA in a message to his members**

1. Anger is a normal response to this news. It is reasonable to be horrified, angry, disappointed and upset at the news coming out of the Pennsylvania grand jury's report. Talking to each other helps; avoiding what we feel does not. Have open and honest discussions with others... Support one another as faculties/staff, and spend time together in discussion and prayer.
2. Remember the basics. The Gospel message is not complex: It's about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Savior, and our relationship with him individually and together. Let's ground ourselves in the basics of what it means to be Catholic as explained, for example, in Ephesians 2:1-2, in the first three paragraphs of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and in the first two sentences of "The Joy of the Gospel" by Pope Francis: "The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness." Only from this foundation can we move forward and serve the students before us. Let us pray deeply to the Lord we know and encounter him in the sacraments.
3. [Do] what we can do. While we may feel powerless to do anything about this broad and terrible situation, there is something we can do: we can live with integrity today, right now; we can put our students first and embrace our calling as Catholic school educators. Remember the statement that is at the entrance of so many of our schools: "Let it be known to all who enter here that Jesus Christ is the reason for this school, the unseen but ever present Teacher in its classes, the Model of its faculty and staff, the Strength of its parents, the Inspiration of its students." ...
4. Keep students safe. Review your diocesan/local child protection policy and implement all programs; ensure full participation by adults and implement safe environment training for students; focus on child safety in all aspects of the life of the school. Many strides have been made in the past decades to practically keep students safe, but everyone must continually work hard to ensure that our children are protected.
5. Teach the truth. Ensure that we as Catholic educators teach the fullness of the Catholic faith, especially with regards to sin, forgiveness, justice, grace, morals and virtue. Now more than ever, effective faith formation and a clear proclamation of truth are needed, and those of us who teach the truth must live that truth with integrity. Let us live with words and actions based on the truth of the Gospel.
6. Tell stories of good works. Amidst the stories of sin and evil, we need to tell stories of good and grace, and there are many stories to tell: ...
7. Build trust. Trust is built gradually over time through right relationships. While trust can be shattered in an instant through awful acts, God's work in our lives is a process, and our work with students unfolds over the daily interactions through which they come to trust their teachers and administrators (Dr. Thomas Kelly, Diocese of Marquette).