



MOUNT CARMEL SCHOOL

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MCS COVID-19 Update #6

Dear Mount Carmel School Family,

We pray that all is well with you and your loved ones as we make it through these challenging times together. With our first week of online learning completed, we want to share some important updates with you:

- Synchronous (live) online classes will be held this Thursday, April 9, Holy Thursday.
- We are working on a tuition assistance program.
- Let us all work together to ensure the online safety of our students.
- We have contingency plans for major school events, and the school year will end on time.
- Help us help you by contacting appropriate school officials if you or your child needs support.
- Campus still closed until further notice.
- How can you help? Follow the modified and simplified guidelines below.
- Please be patient with us as this is a dynamic situation that changes everyday.

SYNCHRONOUS (LIVE) SESSIONS WILL BE HELD THIS THURSDAY

Please note that we will have synchronous (live) online classes this Thursday, April 9, following the Thursday block schedule. You may recall that the school had to make up for days lost to Typhoon Manghut earlier this school year, and it was decided to have a school day on Holy Thursday to help recover lost instructional time. Moreover, our diocese, the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa, will celebrate Mass of the Lord's Supper via live-streaming on Facebook, Cable TV, and radio starting 5:00 pm. This will provide more than enough time for our students to transition from the end of 7th period at 3:00 pm to mass at 5:00 pm. We thank you for your understanding and support, and invite everyone to join our diocese in this year's Paschal Triduum.

TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only spread disease but also disrupted our lives and our economy. Mindful of this, Mount Carmel School's Board of Directors, led Chairman Vicente "Ben" Babauta and guided by Bishop Ryan P. Jimenez, and the school's Leadership Team are developing financing options to provide tuition assistance to families affected by this pandemic.

However, please note that the school tapped most of its reserves in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Yutu so that we could open about two weeks afterwards and restore a sense of normalcy for our students, which included providing running water, power, and even air-conditioning. Unfortunately, we have yet to replenish those reserves as we are still working on remaining funds from FEMA, our insurance provider, and other Yutu related funding sources.

That said, we are doing everything we can to keep the school financially afloat and open so that we can continue meeting the learning needs of our students with our current set of synchronous (live) sessions and asynchronous lessons. With that, we are not going to deny students any instructional services for lack of tuition payment.

Moreover, we intend to launch a tuition assistance program for families in the next week or two. If you would like to avail of the tuition assistance program, please pre-register by completing the secure and confidential form at the following link:

<https://forms.gle/SDhe2qvxAyjDZTk7>

The deadline for pre-registering for tuition assistance is Wednesday, April 15.

ONLINE SAFETY

With social distancing leading many individuals to work and study from home using various online tools, there have been growing concerns about online safety, especially for children. As with any threat to our students, whether they be natural disasters, intruders, or biohazards, Mount Carmel School takes the safety and welfare of our students very seriously and has a set of protocols and procedures to minimize risk, mitigate threats, and respond to crises.

As far as online safety goes, in addition to a robust set of security measures for online instruction, we have taken the following steps:

- **Train:** We provide ongoing training to our teachers and staff to keep them apprised of emerging threats and trends in digital security. This training covers a range of important topics, including how to use and enable privacy and security settings on the different online tools; how to effectively regulate and manage synchronous class sessions; and how to monitor use and misuse of online tools.
- **Equip:** We provide our teachers and staff with resources and routine updates to protect students online and comply with all relevant federal and local laws regarding student privacy and safety. These resources and updates include those provided by the US Department of Education, the US Department of Homeland Security's Cyber Infrastructure Division, the National Catholic Educational Association, our accrediting body COGNIA, and RenWeb/FACTS, which hosts our school's student information management system.
- **Monitor:** We monitor teachers and staff and their use of synchronous and asynchronous material, and intervene as necessary when concerns arise. As with face-to-face instruction, teachers are required to submit lessons plans and resources to school administrators; school administrators observe synchronous sessions by viewing secure

and confidential recordings of those sessions; and they provide feedback and guidance to teachers as they deliver synchronous and asynchronous material to their students.

We also appeal to parents and their families to do your part to ensure online safety at home, whether it be for learning, working, or playing. *This is what you can do:*

- **Talk:** The most important thing you can do is talk with your kids about what they are doing online. Your kids need to feel comfortable sharing with you what they are doing online so that you can be aware of their online lives and so that they can come to you for guidance and support. Be sure to talk with them about important issues such as privacy, online predators, cyberbullying, digital etiquette, and, if appropriate, pornography. As with any issue at home or at school, maintaining open lines of communication with your children is a powerful tool for ensuring their safety, whether online or offline. For more guidance on issues to discuss with your children, refer to the following link from Common Sense Media: <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/privacy-and-internet-safety>
- **Regulate:** Even when stuck at home, structure is important. Set rules for what your kids can and cannot do with their devices and how much they can do, and even consider making a schedule for use those devices. This might include what apps they can and cannot download on their devices, what sites they can and cannot visit, and how much they are allowed to use their devices. You may even consider using a Technology Agreement with your kids, similar to agreements that they have with their school and their teachers. Common Sense Media has a very simple Family Media Agreement form at the following link: https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/uploads/pdfs/common_sense_family_media_agreement.pdf
- **Monitor:** Just as you would pay attention to who your kids are hanging out with in person or what they do when away from home, you should pay attention to who they hang out with online and what they do online. And if you need guidance on what kinds of media and apps are safe and appropriate for kids, Common Sense Media offers very helpful resources for parents and families at the following link: <https://www.commonsensemedia.org>

CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR MAJOR EVENTS/SCHOOL YEAR ENDING ON TIME

As we continue to monitor the evolving social landscape of COVID-19, we have developed the following contingency plans for all major school events, including induction ceremonies for honor societies, First Holy Communion, Confirmation, awards ceremonies, baccalaureate mass, and commencement exercises:

- **Plan A:** All events will be held at the end of the school year. By mid-May, should the Office of the Governor, the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) determine that it is safe enough to lift

social distancing directives that prohibit public gatherings, the school will reschedule all major events for the last week of the school year, May 26 to May 30.

- **Plan B:** All events will be held before/at the beginning of next school year. By mid-July, should the Office of the Governor, the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, and the CHCC determine that it is safe enough to lift social distancing directives that prohibit public gatherings, the school will reschedule all major events for the week before and during the first week of the 2020-2021 school year, July 27 through August 7.
- **Plan C:** All events will be held online before/at the beginning of next school year. By mid-July, should the Office of the Governor, the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, and the CHCC determine that it is NOT safe enough to lift social distancing directives that prohibit public gatherings, the school will reschedule all major events for the week before and during the first week of the 2020-2021 school year, July 27 through August 7 and hold these events as virtual events online, using either Facebook, YouTube, and/or other streaming platforms.

As decisions are made about which plan to follow, a detailed schedule of events will be published. Also, please note that because we pushed up our Spring Break to run from March 16 to March 27, and we have made up for loss instructional days in other ways, we will still end the school year on time by May 27.

HELP US HELP YOU BY CONTACTING APPROPRIATE SCHOOL OFFICIALS

With the transition to online learning and the ordeal that our community is enduring, we want to assure you that Mount Carmel School stands ready to support our students during this difficult time. As such, other than your child(ren)'s teacher(s), please note the following points of contact for the listed areas:

Teachers and Learners

Principal Barbara Merfalen: bkmerfalen@gmail.com

Vice Principal Bobby Baldazo: bsbmtcarmel@gmail.com

Spiritual Health

Campus Minister Vir Abueme: abuemevir@gmail.com

Social/Emotional Health

Counselor Tobed Smith: tobeds@gmail.com

Registrar and Digital Tools

Office Manager Leeani Villagomez: mtcarmelschool.secretary@gmail.com

Please also refer to the attached MCS Parent Guide for Online Learning.

Financial Transactions

Business Manager John Blanco: mtcarmelknights@gmail.com

Media and Communications

Director of Institutional Development Victoria Deleon Guerrero: v.dlguerrero95@gmail.com

CAMPUS CLOSED DOWN UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

The campus will be closed down with gates closed all day until further notice. Only authorized employees and officials will be granted access as needed. Financial and academic transactions can still be conducted online or via email. For financial transactions, email Business Manager John Blanco at mtcarmelknights@gmail.com. For academic transactions, contact Office Manager Leeani Villagomez at mtcarmelschool.secretary@gmail.com.

WHAT YOU CAN DO (Modified and Simplified Guidelines)

This public health crisis calls on all of us to do what we can to keep our community safe. This is what you and your friends and family can do to help:

Stay Healthy: Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks. If surfaces are dirty, clean them, using detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

Stay Home: Protect yourself and others by minimizing contact with others. Since someone may carry COVID-19 without showing any symptoms, social interactions, especially among large crowds, may unintentionally spread the virus. Parents are thus asked to keep their children at home and refrain from letting them visit residences of friends or family or meet up with them in public.

Stay Informed: Refer to reliable and credible sources of information. Do not rely on or spread rumors, hearsay, and fake news that runs rampant on the coconut wireless and online. The CHCC and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) provide important resources and information that provide clear guidance on how all of us can get through this crisis. Follow these COVID-19 updates from the CHCC and CDC:

<https://www.chcc.gov.mp/coronavirusinformation.php>

<https://www.coronavirus.gov>

Stay Strong: As a Catholic school, our faith can bring us strength, no matter what is happening in world. Students can pray devotional prayers appropriate for the season of Lent like the Holy Rosary and the Stations of the Cross. Also, everyone can follow daily masses from Mount Carmel Cathedral on the following Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/dioceseofchalankanoa/videos/>

DYNAMIC SITUATION

As this is a dynamic situation that changes on a daily basis, the future is uncertain and many questions still remain. The school's Leadership Team, guided by Bishop Ryan P. Jimenez and the school's Board of Directors, are making decisions based on the best and most accurate information available at any given time. Please be assured that no matter what we do, we will provide ample notification and information to all students, parents, teachers, and families via email, our website, all our social media outlets, and local media. In other words, you will definitely hear from us and know what to do.

These are challenging times, but we have survived devastating typhoons, economic recessions, and many other tragedies. With **FAITH** in our Lord, **HOPE** for a better tomorrow, and **LOVE** for each other, we will get through this together. We are **KNIGHT STRONG**. We are **MARIANAS STRONG**. To see a great example of this strength and spirit, check out the newest school video at either of the following links:

On YouTube: <https://youtu.be/QMIRREAL09U>

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/318566068228891/videos/561075887868917/>

Our Lady of Mount Carmel...

Galvin Deleon Guerrero, EdD
President
Mount Carmel School, Inc.