



MOUNT CARMEL SCHOOL

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MCS COVID-19 Update #7

Dear Mount Carmel School Family,

It is hard to believe that it has been about two months since we have been sheltered in place and are now in our fifth week of online learning, all to keep each other safe during this pandemic. We thank you for your understanding, patience, and flexibility as we all do our best to support the continued learning and growth of our students.

As we move forward, we wanted to share some important updates with you, all of which are summarized in these bullet points and followed by a more detailed set of announcements.

- *COVID-19 community-based testing is now available.*
- *We are sharing some resources to help you and your loved ones through this crisis.*
- *Early Bird Registration deadline is extended as we continue working on ways to assist families.*
- *Join us for our first ever Virtual Spirit Week from May 11 through May 15.*
- *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 guidelines below.*
- *Please be patient with us as this is a dynamic situation that changes everyday.*

COVID-19 COMMUNITY-BASED TESTING NOW AVAILABLE

Governor Ralph Torres and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) announced this week that the CNMI is making free COVID-19 testing available for anyone in the community. To participate in the community testing, please follow these steps:

- Step 1: Request a test online at <https://chcc.gov.mp/covid19testing.php> or by calling any of the numbers in the attached guide.
- Step 2: Wait until you are contacted by CHCC for your scheduled test.
- Step 3: Prepare for your testing appointment by wearing a face-mask, bringing your test number, and providing photo identification.
- Step 4: Show up for your testing appointment at the Saipan International Airport.
- Step 5: Wait for your test results from CHCC.

For more information on this community-based COVID-19 testing, please refer to the attached guide.

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU THROUGH THIS CRISIS

While this pandemic has had a devastating impact on community health, the economy, and our society, there are several resources that you and your loved ones can avail of to help you through this crisis. We have compiled a set of these resources for your reference and use, all of which are linked below:

- [COVID-19 Frequent Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) from CHCC, the Office of the Governor, and the Governor’s COVID-19 Task Force
- [“Coronavirus: What You Need to Know”](#) from the Office of US Congressman Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
- [“Grab and Go Meals” Schedule and Information](#) from the CNMI Public School System and the Governor’s COVID-19 Task Force
- [A Guide to Pandemic Unemployment Assistance](#) from the Office of the Governor
- [A Guide to Economic Impact Payments or “Stimulus Checks”](#) from the Office of the Governor
- [A Guide to Direct Assistance for the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#) from the Office of US Congressman Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
- [A Guide to Running Essential Errands](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- [A Guide to Face Masks](#) from the CDC
- [“Helping Children Cope With Changes Resulting From COVID-19”](#) from the National Association of School Psychologists

In addition to these resources, the Northern Mariana Islands Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence advises that, during this time, survivors may be forced to be isolated with or near their abuser putting them more at risk of harm. Even though we are all practicing social distancing, help is still available for victims and survivors in the CNMI. If you need emergency assistance, please call 911. If you or someone you know is experiencing violence or abuse, you can call to speak to advocates and other service providers at: Karidat’s 24/7 Victim Hotline at (670) 234-5100 DCCA Division of Youth Services at (670) 287-1773, (670) 285-2780 or (670) 285-2781, and the CNMI Family Court at (670) 783-7825.

Lastly, the school is assembling an Emergency Food Pantry for members of our school family that are in need. If you or someone you know is facing a food shortage in your home, or if you would like to contribute to the pantry, please contact us at galvin.deleonguerrero@gmail.com. We pledge to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all involved and will provide assistance with the utmost discretion.

EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT DEADLINE EXTENDED AND OTHER WAYS TO ASSIST OUR FAMILIES

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. Here are some ways we are helping families:

The SY 2020-2021 Early Bird Registration Discount of \$200 per child (normally \$400) deadline, originally set for May 2, is being extended until June 5. To apply online, simply access the admissions link on our school website, mountcarmelsaipan.com, and follow the instructions posted. If you need assistance, please contact our Office Manager, Leeani Villagomez, at mtcarmelschool.secretary@gmail.com

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. In addition, we are also waiving all late fees that have been or will be incurred during this crisis.

Lastly, we continue to develop a tuition assistance program for families for those families that pre-registered for the program by the April 15th deadline. We intend to announce details for this program within the next week or two.

MAY 11—15: VIRTUAL SPIRIT WEEK

You can take the student out of the school, but you can't take the school out of the student. With that in mind and heart, we invite students, faculty, staff, AlumKnights, and the entire community to its first ever Virtual Spirit Week, May 11-15.

- **Blue Monday:** Wear something blue, take a pic, and post it. #BlueSpirit
- **Teachers Tuesday:** Show your appreciation for your teachers. #ThankYouTeachers
- **Winners' Wednesday:** Celebrate the wins of yours, friends or the school. #KnightsWin
- **Throwback Thursday:** Post your favorite throwback pic of campus.
#ThrowbackThursday
- **Fun Friday:** Share what you've been doing for fun while at home. #QuarantineFun

Please also join us for a streamed Pep Rally on Friday, May 15, at 10:00 am. See skits, cheers, banners, and dances streamed live on the school's Facebook page and YouTube Channel. Then, vote for your favorites to determine who wins!

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

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 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> and <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/diocesefchalankanoa/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, 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.