

Memo to: Parents and Guardians
Memo from: Sr. Margaret Mancuso
June 1, 2020



These past few months have held unexpected challenges, heartache, and multiple stresses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In May, as NYS Pause entered Phase 1, hope was re-ignited, but tensions increased for those who had to wait for Phases 2-4. Warmer weather arrived and spirits brightened, yet there was also the risk and fear of more cases of COVID-19. On Memorial Day weekend, we remembered those who made, and are making, tremendous sacrifices by fighting for freedom and peace around our world. Hearts have been heavy.

This past week brought even greater heartache, anger, disbelief, and a whole host of other emotions over the brutal killing of George Floyd by a white police officer. People all over the country have come together – in both peaceful demonstrations and in violent ones. We saw both of these firsthand this weekend right here at home. We saw a peaceful protest against violence and racism where people of all ethnicities and backgrounds came together in solidarity to say change needs to happen now, violence needs to end now, and racism needs to be openly and honestly addressed now. Yet later, violent protests causing horrible destruction overshadowed the message of the first gathering. Our hearts are heavy.

I pray all of you remain safe. These acts of violence are traumatizing for so many – students, families, educators, and the community at large. Coping with this along with the stress of the coronavirus pandemic can be overwhelming. Please know that the teachers, Mrs. Conrow our social worker, and I are here for you. We will be sharing more resources as we receive them but know that some we put on our website to help deal with the coronavirus may help now, too.

Rochester City School District has listed some social-emotional supports on their website. I share them here. Support teams will be available at the food distribution sites this week.

Student Support Services Team

Beginning June 1, members of the Student Support Services team will be available to support students as needed at all meal distribution sites from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m.

RCSD Support Hotline | 585-262-8700

Hours: Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

RCSD has established a hotline for families for resources and support. [Learn More](#)

National Child Traumatic Stress Network [Learn More](#)

The events of these times call for each one of us to examine our own fears and prejudices and to stand up for peace and justice. As educators, we have a responsibility to help our children

appreciate their heritage and cultures, to believe in themselves, to respect all people, and to know that they, too, can make a difference in promoting justice and peace. Our theme from Micah and our focus each year on Gospel values, including this year's theme of kindness, fit well with the reality of today.

There is much work ahead for our country, and there is much work ahead for every parent and educator. During this time of *Pentecost*, we ask the *Holy Spirit*, who united people of every race and nation, to guide us in all our words and actions. We ask the Spirit to give our leaders and each one of us wisdom, understanding, and courage to challenge one another to face fears and prejudices, to work together to wipe out racism, to alleviate injustices, and to seek equality for all people everywhere.

Some quotes from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., follow that are good for reflection right now. We as a country have not fulfilled Dr. King's dream yet, but we must keep working toward it. We can honor Dr. King, George Floyd, and so many others by working together for peace, justice, and equality for every man, woman, and child.

A commitment statement posted by the Sisters of St. Joseph will be on our website. All of us at Nazareth Elementary, an SSJ ministry, are part of this congregational commitment. We, too, promise our prayerful support as our community and our nation move toward peace, healing, and reconciliation. We pray for you and your children that you will stay safe and well. We will continue to walk together in peace and love.

May your week bring you many graces and blessings.
Let us stand united in this time and place in our history.
Together we can make a difference.
We miss you and pray for you and your family every day!



Words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. -

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that."

"The time is always right to do what is right."

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

"We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence."