

KENNEDY CATHOLIC ♦ SAINT MARY'S

THE GAEL

FALL 2020 • VOLUME 31

Covid-19

*How We Met
The Challenge*

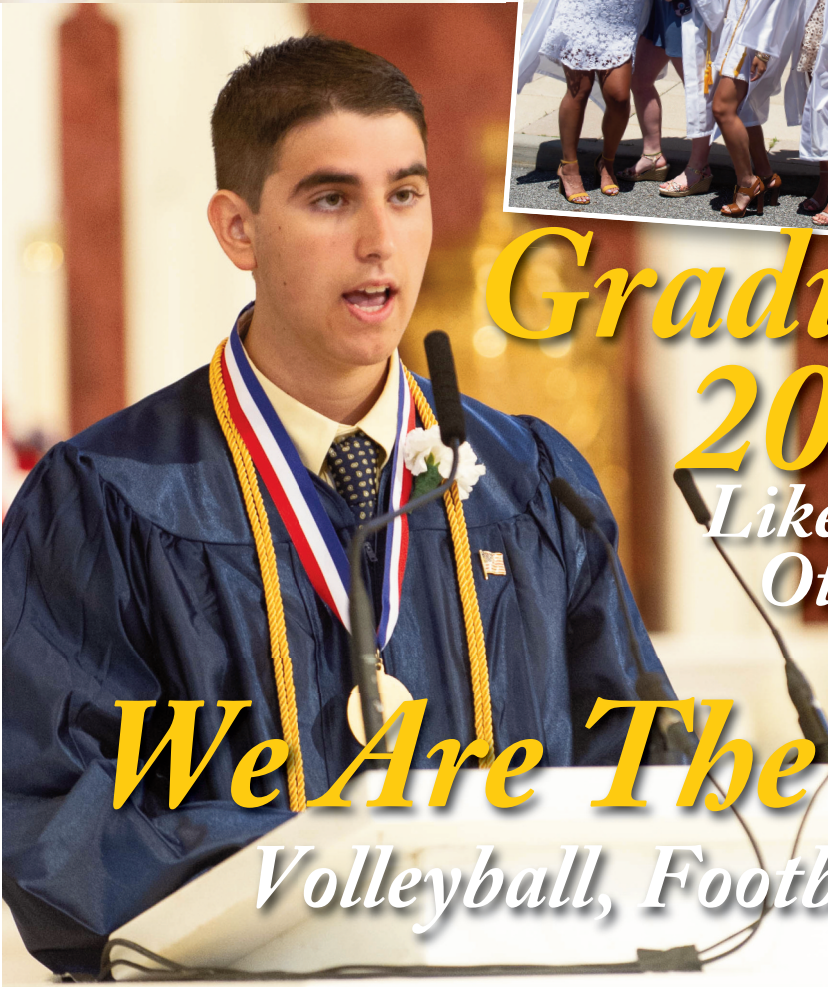


Graduation 2020

*Like None
Other*

We Are The Champions!

Volleyball, Football & Soccer Win!



President's Message



Dear Friend of Kennedy Catholic,

***"That which does not kill you...
can still leave you black-and-blue for weeks."***

That more whimsical variation on the old Nietzsche chestnut came to mind this spring as our academic, business and personal lives were upturned when Westchester became ground zero in New York for the new coronavirus. Many plans — including the in-classroom end to the school year — were scuttled, some were postponed, and others were altered by the quick and imaginative thinking of our teachers, parents and students.

Happily, our school's investment in technology yielded an unexpected dividend when it enabled us to swiftly and painlessly transition to remote learning. That didn't mean there weren't some adventures to be had along the way, and you'll read about some of them in this issue's special COVID-19 section.

The Catholic High School Athletic Association wisely canceled our spring sports seasons shortly after the coronavirus descended on the area, bringing our spring sports teams' aspirations to abrupt ends. A few of our fall and winter teams were fortunate to not only finish their calendars, but do so with a spectacular flourish.

The **Kennedy Catholic** varsity volleyball team went 22-0 for their second straight season, finishing second in the state as they won the prized City Championship. Our **boys soccer team, also city champs, claimed their second straight**



CHSAA intersectional Class A title. Both those teams have a long history of winning, and you can read more about them in this issue.

There has not been the same winning legacy for Kennedy's football team, but that all changed this season. In November, the gridiron Gaels succeeded where all of their predecessors had failed: they won the New York Catholic High School Football League Class A Championship. The ending of that game may have been the wildest in the team's — or the league's — history, and you can read about it in this issue.

The circumstances may have been a bit peculiar, but at least the weather was perfect for Graduation Day for the Class of 2020 this past June. We've tried to capture some of those memories — as well as a bit of the madness — in a pictorial this issue.

COVID-19 may have deprived this year's crop of Students of Excellence of their President's Dinner, but we celebrate them this issue, along with Sr. Mary McCaffrey. She's been teaching students, excellent and otherwise, since just after World War II.

Back in January, which now seems like years ago, Kennedy Catholic led a large contingent of high school and grammar school students to witness history: the first appearance by a President of the United States at the National March for Life in Washington DC. The group spent two days in our nation's capitol, and their report is in this issue.

The upheaval caused by the virus has laid bare how fragile our society can be, but it has also shown us the great strength of our community at Kennedy Catholic. There is no enemy, invisible or otherwise, so great that joined together in the Grace of God we cannot triumph over it.

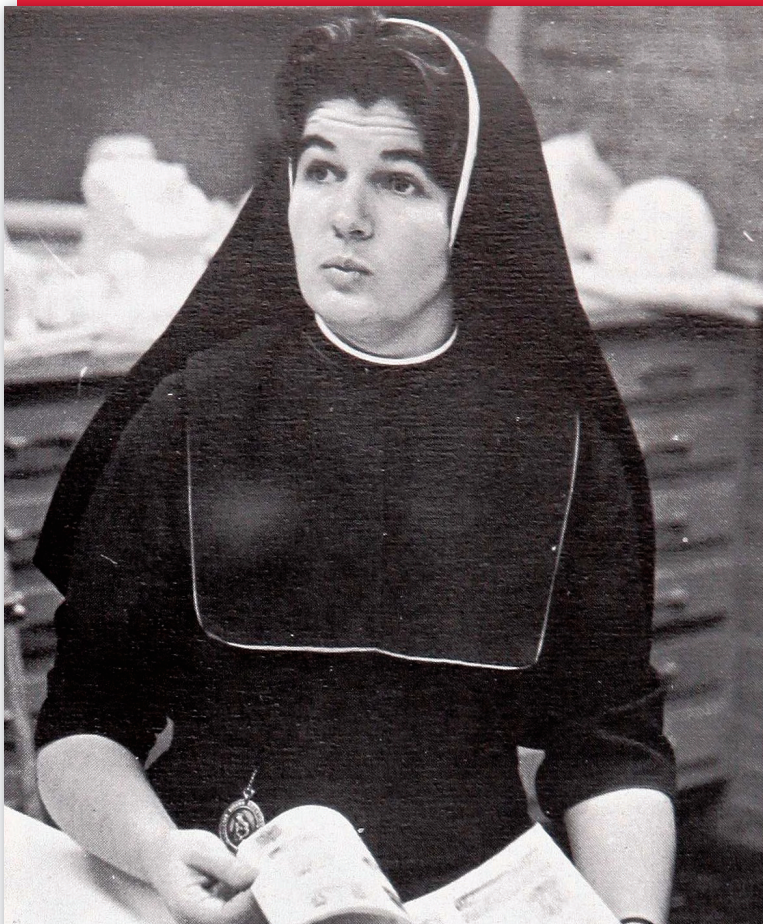
Sincerely yours in Christ

Rev. Mark G. Vaillancourt, Ph.D.
President and Principal

Events at Kennedy Catholic

Golf Classic - Oct. 1

Open House - Oct. 4 and 14



AS WE GO TO PRESS:

Sr. Janet Meehan, RDC, a Sister of the Divine Compassion, died peacefully on June 17. Sister Janet joined Kennedy in 1967 where she taught math and was chair of the Art Department. She not only created the girls track and cross country programs at Kennedy Catholic, she was an influential — many would say “legendary” — advocate for female runners and throwers in Section 1 and throughout New York. Sister continued teaching at Kennedy Catholic until her retirement in 2015.

UPDATE YOUR ALUMNI RECORDS

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Student of Distinction *Taran* *Agnihotri*

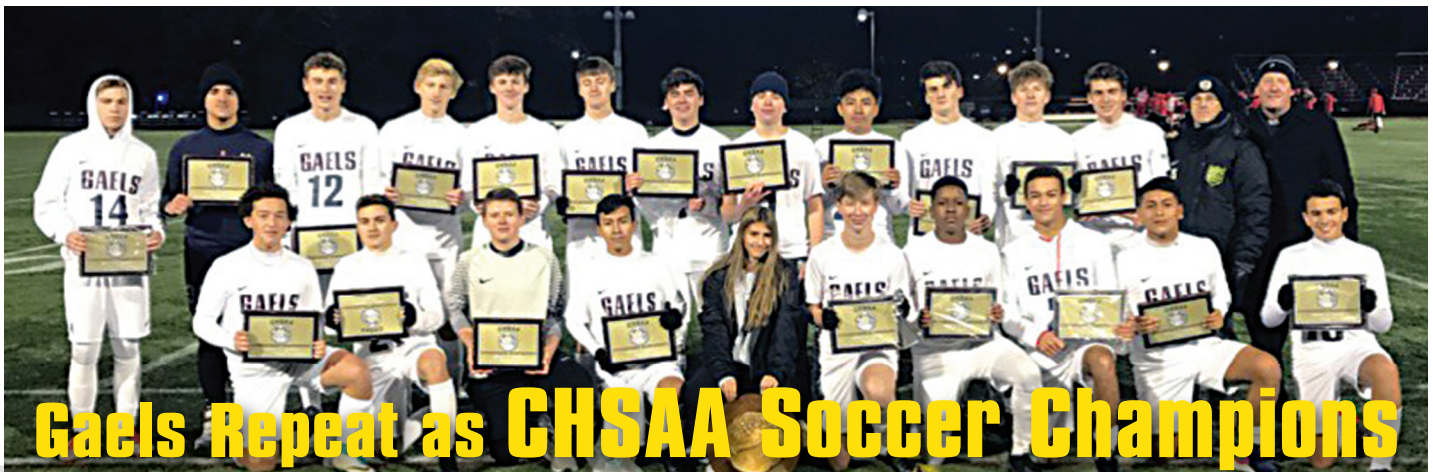
Taran Agnihotri of the Kennedy Class of 2020 was awarded a prestigious National Merit Scholarship.

The scholarship is based in no small part on the student's score on the PSAT in their junior year. Their academic record, SAT scores, extracurricular and leadership experiences, and an essay also factor in to the decision.

Agnihotri held a spot on the President's List throughout his high school career, and was co-captain of the school's award-winning Vex Robotics team, which made it to the World Competition three years in a row. He was also a member of the National Honor Society, and four-year member of the Science Olympiad team.

As an intern at McGraw Hill, Agnihotri developed a curriculum to teach STEM skills using robots to under-served middle and high school students at Harlem Educational Activities Fund in New York City. After developing the curriculum, he taught the course at HEAF as a volunteer. In the summer after sophomore year, he led a team teaching English to students who attended government-funded summer camps in Merida, Mexico, where his fluency in Spanish helped him navigate and lead. His service earned him the United States President's Volunteer Service Award.

This fall, he will be attending Georgia Tech, studying computer science.



It's even sweeter the second time around.

The Kennedy Catholic boys soccer team claimed their second straight CHSAA intersectional Class A title with a 1-0 victory over Monsignor McClancy on a frosty Monday night in November at Fordham University's Coffey Field.

McClancy hammered the Gaels early on, and there was not much Kennedy could do to keep the Crusaders on their side of the field. But in the second half, a re-energized Gael defense kept their rivals in check, eventually forcing a turnover at midfield. Junior Liam Mulholland sailed with the ball up the sideline deep into enemy territory before deftly passing it off to senior captain Connor Trainor, who delivered the package into the lower left of the McClancy net.

With eight minutes still to play, the Kennedy defense would not give the Crusaders an opening to counter. Goalie Luke Tomazsewsky made three saves, on his route to the shutout.

Although there were more than a few nails gnawed among the strong turnout of Kennedy friends, families, students, alumni, and staff, for some the outcome was never in doubt.

"There was just never any pressure," Mulholland said after the game. "We knew we were going to win and we did."

Spoken like a true Gael!



Kennedy Catholic High School Is Now Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School

So, what's the big deal?

In some states, any high school can hang out a shingle calling themselves a "prep," but not New York.

As part of the name change, the school needed to get approval from the New York State Board of Regents, a process that got mired down by the COVID-19 outbreak. Approval finally came through in June.

That blessing came after similar approvals were sought after and awarded by the local district and the Archdiocese of New York.

Kennedy had been anxious to make the switch for a while.

As Fr. Vaillancourt explained, there was a tendency to equating Kennedy with just another school district. "But what they're doing, and what we are doing, is very different," he said.

Kennedy students are offered a full suite of advanced placement and college accredited courses, and can earn college credits as early as freshman year from schools such as Iona College and St. John's University. In their junior and senior year, the Pace College business curriculum becomes available to them.

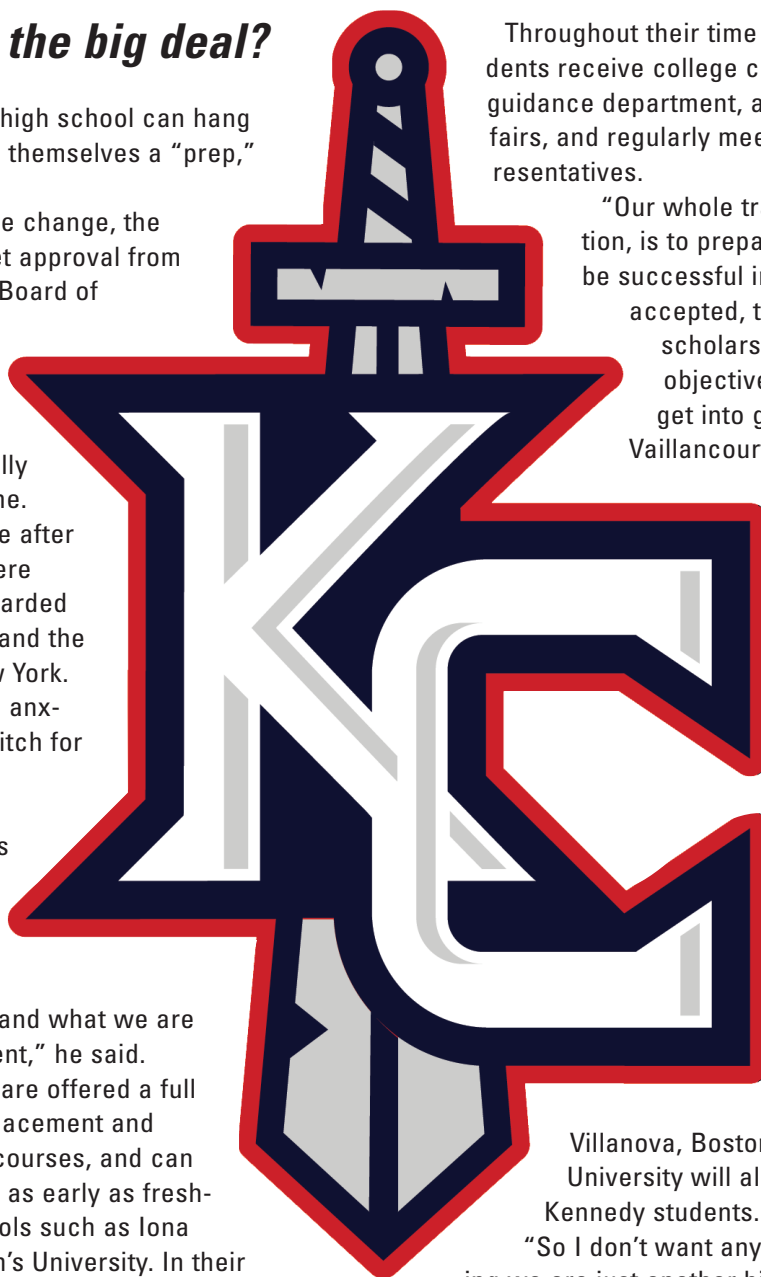
Throughout their time at Kennedy, all students receive college counseling from the guidance department, attend annual college fairs, and regularly meet with university representatives.

"Our whole track, our whole direction, is to prepare a student well to be successful in college: to get accepted, to get merit-based scholarships, to get high objective test scores, and to get into great schools," Fr. Vaillancourt said.

The most recent year is the best example of that philosophy in action yet. The Kennedy Class of 2020 earned over \$54 million in scholarship money, along with some stellar university acceptance: Four recent grads will be attending Notre Dame in the fall, two more are going to Penn State. Cornell,

Villanova, Boston College and Boston University will also be admitting Kennedy students.

"So I don't want anyone out there thinking we are just another high school. No, we are a college preparatory school."



KENNEDY & COVID-19

What Happened, and What Happens Next

The coronavirus outbreak in Westchester and the surrounding areas caught town governments, businesses and even hospitals flat-footed. Schools were particularly befuddled, playing host as they did to thousands of the most vulnerable residents.

For most schools, it was a case of “send everybody home, and let’s come up with a plan.” At Kennedy Catholic Prep, the solutions were already in place, and online.

Kennedy’s policy of regularly scheduling “e-learning” days whenever school was canceled due to bad weather not only obviated the need to make up for snow days at the end of the year, but also laid the groundwork for distance learning in the coronavirus crisis. As a result, the school offered continuous remote instruction beginning in the second week of March for almost three months, through the end of the 2019-20 school year.

Kennedy used Canvas, a remote learning management system that creates an online portal between the teacher and the class, coupled with its workhorse iPad technology. Teachers relied upon software from ExamSoft that integrated with Canvas and the Apple technology for test-taking.

As ready as Kennedy was for the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic, it’s really ahead of the curve facing off against whatever the fall will bring. Earlier in the year, the school installed 75”

Viewsonic smartboards, each with an embedded web conferencing client, in every classroom.

Fr. Vaillancourt says the so-called “Zoom rooms” will enable Kennedy to support two identical and simultaneous classroom experiences. One is the academic cohort (The “Sr. Barbara Cohort”) consisting of no more than 20 socially-distanced students in a room, along with the teacher. The second cohort (“Sr. Christopher”) will assemble in a room on the other side of the build-

ing — or at home — with the same audio, video and interactivity as the first one.

“If a parent says, ‘I’m worried,’ okay, you can stay at home, and learn from us remotely, we will accommodate that,” Fr. Vaillancourt said.

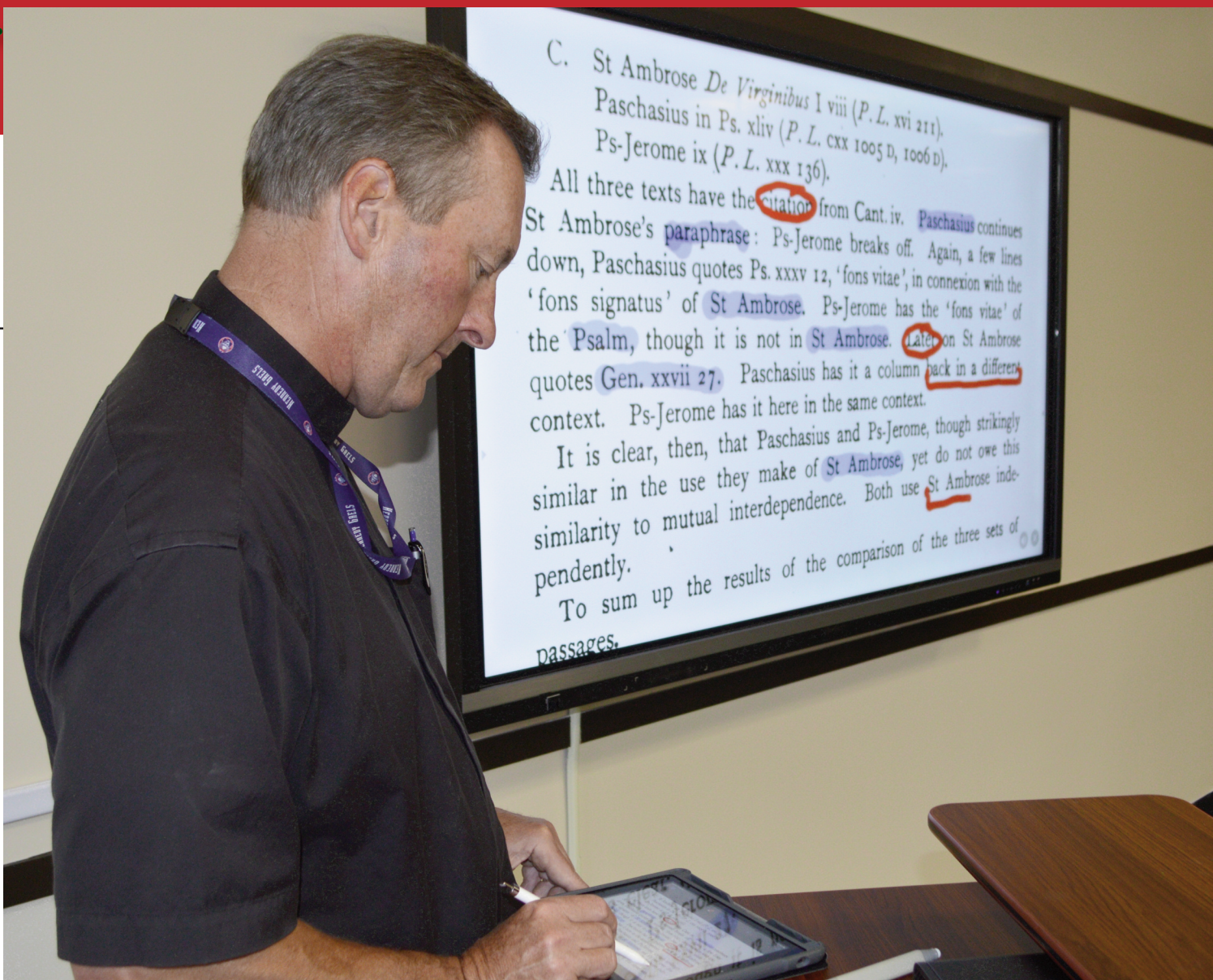
Ultimately, it will be a healthier arrangement for the students. A 2017 systematic review of 40 studies from 1950 to 2016 published in the journal *Public Health* found a significant association between social isolation and loneliness, and poorer mental health outcomes.

Antonia Jenkins, who teaches 3D computer modeling, robotics, and AP Computer Science, has taken on the classroom technology



leadership mantle, and is tasked with keeping everything running and connected.

“The students don’t have to stay home, the parents don’t have to be there monitoring,” said Mark Girolamo, a 1971 Kennedy graduate who currently chairs the Building & Grounds Committee on the Board of Directors. He is also the chair of the blue ribbon panel of experts that includes health care professionals, engineers, HVAC experts and cleaning gurus that Kennedy assembled to craft a reopening strategy.



Their plan combines industry best practices as well as guidelines and directives from the Archdiocese of New York, the Town of Somers, and the State of New York.

The on-site remote learning won't begin on day one," Girolamo said. "There will be enough going on then. But once we feel we can bring (the students) in, we will use the largest spaces in the building — the gymnasium, the cafeteria, the auditorium — for remote learning centers."

Even though the on-site remote-learners will be working inside the building, they will still be separated completely by cohort. There will be no intermingling among the groups, and the flow of the building is such that there is no reason for the cohorts to ever come into contact with one another, according to Girolamo.

Desks in all classrooms are spaced out by more than six feet, and students will wear masks in the classroom — which Girolamo describes as "wearing a belt and suspenders."

The building alone is a full three square acres, and all the classrooms, labs and pedagogical spaces are situated on one floor. In fact, when all students, teachers staff and administration are in the building, it is still only at 50 percent capacity, Fr. Vaillancourt said.

Each cohort will enter the building through their own separate door, and each student will have their temperature checked as they arrive.

"If someone comes in and their temperature is over a hundred

degrees, that's a sign," Girolamo said. "They may not have COVID, but we can't take that chance."

That student will be moved to an isolation area, but it will be done in such a manner that they will not come into the building. The student will remain there until their parents come to pick them up.

"Any person showing any of the symptoms we are looking for is not going to walk into the general population of the school," Girolamo said.

If there is an outbreak in one cohort, that cohort will stay home, where they will stay in self-quarantine according to best practice guidelines dictated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The school's HVAC system has been upgraded and will employ a relatively new process called "needlepoint bipolar ionization." Basically what it does, is it shoots ions into the air, which will latch onto and "deactivate" any pathogens that someone might have coughed up. A recent independent testing commissioned by the US Defense Department shows the process neutralizes 99.4 percent of SARS-CoV-2 in just 30 minutes. Spiffier still, the technology is self-cleaning and pretty much maintenance-free.

"Whatever the fall of 2020 brings, wherever we are in September, Kennedy Catholic will be ready to go forward and continue our tradition of quality, college preparatory education at the highest level," said Fr. Vaillancourt.

Crunch Time

How One Kennedy Family Weathered the Pandemic

The spring of 2020 was supposed to be The Big One for the Cohen family. Their oldest child, Susanna, Kennedy class of '15, was graduating from Notre Dame following five years of study in South Bend. Their oldest boy, Austin, class of '16, would be graduating from the Merchant Marine Academy following his four years there. And their youngest child, Dorrian, would be graduating from Kennedy with the rest of the class of 2020.

Anne and Howard Cohen had made meticulous and enthusiastic plans to attend each of their children's commencement ceremonies. It's a rare treat for any family to see three of their children pick up their sheepskins in the same year.

But "we plan, God laughs," as our grandma used to say. When the coronavirus pandemic hit, Susanna decided to stay in Indiana, awaiting what would eventually be a low-key "virtual" graduation. Austin was already home with his folks on spring break, where he would remain taking classes online through the end of his final year at the Academy. Dorrian wouldn't be heading back to class, either, as Kennedy switched to distance learning through the end of the year.

Howard, an executive at Pepsico, had also been sent home to work. Although it was great having all her boys home every day, Anne knew it wouldn't be long before something gave way.

But nobody guessed it would be the Wi-Fi.

After a couple of weeks, Anne said she began to notice that their connectivity to the outside world "was not keeping up."

"Because of where we live, (Poughquag, in Dutchess County, atop a high hill) Verizon wasn't offering any kind of meaningful upgrade," she said, so the Cohens had to shell out for an additional internet service from a separate provider.

Dad working from home, Dorrian and Austin in their final stretches of high school and college careers, and connectivity issues added new meaning to the phrase "crunch time" in the Cohen household.

"If someone was taking a test or a final, the rest of us got out of the way," Anne said. "Howard went downstairs, did most of his work there, and we just tried to work around who had the priority at the moment."

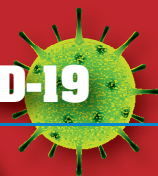
Anne said she thought the whole experience was a bit easier for her sons than it was for her husband, as "They had the iPads and they were used to (distance learning) for snow days."

Howard said he works with a number of parents with students in neighboring districts who were very frustrated their kids' schools couldn't get their acts together. "We were very blessed," Howard said. "The commitment that Father (Vaillancourt) made to technology and infrastructure really paid off."

Ultimately, the COVID-19 crisis may have tested the Kennedy community, but the students and families were up for the challenge, and maybe even the better for it.

"I don't want to get too dramatic, but as Christians, as Americans, we've faced (crises) before, and always come out stronger," Howard said. "I think the economy is going to be stronger, I think spiritually we're going to be stronger... There's been a lot of bad — I've worked with people who have lost loved ones, it's just been awful — but I really think we're going to come out of this stronger in the years to come."





Dodging a Bullet

Student Finds Bright Side of Lockdown

ing for those tests, he got the call from the school saying those Friday classes were canceled. Over the weekend, the shutdown was extended through the end of March. Eventually, Dorrian would be told in-school classes would not be returning for the 2019-20 school year.

That left "distance learning," or "virtual classes," if you prefer, and these kicked in quickly. The experience would evolve over the course of the lockdown.

"In the beginning, you got your assignments at 8 a.m., and they were due at 3 p.m." Dorrian said. "Then around 3 p.m., you got homework assignments, and those would be due either at midnight or eight the next morning. And that was the cycle for a while."

Dorrian said that not many tests were scheduled in the beginning, but that changed toward the end of the third quarter when "teachers had to get grades in."

"All the teachers all had different ways to adapt tests for distance learning," Dorrian said.

It was new, and strange, but ultimately Dorrian thinks Kennedy students came out ahead on the deal.

"Overall, I think it was probably easier," said Dorrian, an Eagle Scout and class valedictorian. "Of my seven classes, six were A.P.'s, and a couple of weeks after this started (the College Board) stepped back and

reduced the scope of what would be on the exams." For Dorrian's classmates, that meant their studies became primarily a review of material taught pre-pandemic.

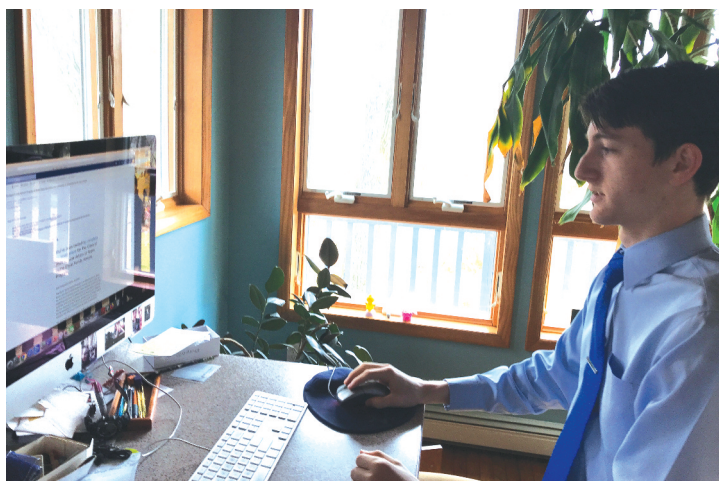
Dorrian will be entering Notre Dame in the fall to study biology. "I was just happy it happened the weekend it did — the weekend before was the play." Dorrian was heavily involved in the stage crew for the spring musical, "Young Frankenstein." The Kennedy Players, crew and orchestra had just completed all four scheduled performances when the world turned upside down.

But there was still the end of the season for spring sports, and that bullet hit hard. That Thursday, March 12, Dorrian said he was informed that the remainder of the track season would be canceled. It soon became clear the runners weren't alone. The Catholic

High School Athletic Association had just announced it had suspended all sporting events and practices due to heightened fears over coronavirus at the instruction of the superintendent of schools in the Archdiocese of New York.

That was all she wrote for spring sports, but at that point Dorrian believed the rest of the school year would play out as scheduled. After all, he still had three tests scheduled for the next day.

But while he was in the midst of studying for those tests, he got the call from the school saying those Friday classes were canceled. Over the weekend, the shutdown was extended through the end of March. Eventually, Dorrian would be told in-school classes would not be returning for the 2019-20 school year.



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Everybody had something to lose when the coronavirus shut down Kennedy Catholic, but no stakeholders were as deeply invested as the Class of 2020.

As ill-timed as the virus was (and, really, when would be the best time for a pandemic?), Kennedy senior Dorrian Cohen still felt like he had dodged a bullet.

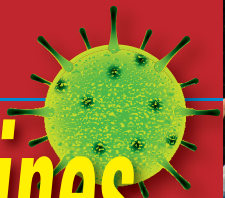
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Kennedy Student on the Virus Front Lines



Kennedy senior Patrick Baia had picked a heckuva time to become an emergency medical technician.

He'd been training formally since September of 2019, and received his New York State certification in January. Since the beginning of the year he had been working with Empress Ambulance Services in Yonkers, while finishing his senior year at Kennedy. As part-time jobs go, it beat slinging custard at King Kone.

Then in March, the coronavirus outbreak swept into Westchester, a black swan event that would have an abiding effect on everyone in the area, but none more than first responders like Baia.

"When it started, none of us really knew what to expect, it was a free-for-all," Baia told *The Gael*. "And then right when school closed and things started to get really bad, we were getting 16-17 calls in a 10-hour shift, just going and going and going, with no breaks. Everything was a COVID patient, every hospital was completely overloaded, and there were no beds for any patients."

Baia, a Mahopac resident, said that he and his colleagues were reeling because "nobody had been trained for anything like this."

Empress covers six to seven towns in the area, Baia said, but a large number of his runs were to New York City, moving patients among hospitals there due to the over-crowding.

"After about mid-April things started to die down, and there were a lot less calls, and the hospitals were starting to empty because people were getting too scared to go to the hospital," Baia said.

There was never much doubt that he would be spending much of his life in the back of an ambulance, helping people in distress. Baia's mother is a nurse, and his dad is a paramedic. He began volunteering with ambulance crews at the age of 14, anxiously waiting for the ducks and the stars to align so he could start working on his state certifications. He described the process:

"For most people you take a class at a hospital or a community college, which will take from three to six months, depending upon the program. Usually you meet three or four times a week. You learn anatomy and physiology, and how to treat certain illnesses, all leading up to clinicals and ride-alongs with an agency such as Empress. Follow by state exams and state practical exams, and you're certified."

Baia correctly called that the pandemic would start to die down as summer progressed, but thinks that in the fall, when he will enter the University of New Haven majoring in paramedicine, "we're going to get hit with a second wave. Hopefully not, but that's my prediction."



That Championship Season?

GAELS WIN CLASS A DIVISION

In November, the football Gaels succeeded where all of their predecessors had failed: they won the **New York Catholic High School Football League Class A Championship**.

And no matter how big a Gael fan you are, how starry-eyed an alumnus, you can't even pretend you saw that coming. The ravages of graduation more than decimated the ranks of the previous year's team, who had lost a heartbreaker to the Cardinal Spellman Pilots in the previous season's championship game.

"We lost about 90 percent of our offense and about 90 percent of our defense and production from a year ago. So to replace all of that in one year — not to mention our kicker, we had to replace him — we're basically replacing all three phases of the game," said Dom Tassone, Kennedy athletic director and head football coach.

Tassone said he fielded about 16 freshmen on the team in the last season, all of whom received significant playing time — with four of them starting in the championship. The Pilots, on the other hand, fielded a team mostly untouched by graduation.

If you missed the game, you missed "the craziest game I have ever been a part of," Tassone told *The Gael*.



Spellman had assembled a 20-14 lead in the second quarter, but Kennedy roared back after the half, putting another 16 points on the scoreboard. They led Spellman 30-20 as the clock began to tick down.

"We're up by 10, there's about two-and-

a-half [minutes] to go," Tassone said. "The game is essentially over. We have a bad punt. They score. They come back in 20 seconds, they put one up, they score again. They get a penalty for 'excessive celebration.'"

Yeah, we've never heard of that, either. But if you're not going to celebrate excessively after your team completes a 50-yard pass with just 16 seconds remaining to take a 33-30 lead, when are you going to do it?

But 16 seconds can be an awful long time when you've slipped into an alternate universe, and that's pretty much where the Gaels found themselves. A penalty and an out-of-bounds kickoff gave Kennedy the ball at the Spellman 30, and Tassone tapped kicker Liam Mullholland to sail one through the uprights to tie the game.

In overtime, Kennedy senior and first-year QB Clayton Proctor, who had already carried the ball into the endzone three times, ran it there for another 12 yards, icing the Gaels' victory. He finished the game with 30 carries and 283 yards on the ground, and another 11 for 14 pass completions for 130 yards, **including one**



16-yard touchdown.

"It was a wild game," Tassone said. "It was fun. There was a ton of people there, it was great for the Kennedy community, and I'm just glad that Father (Vaillancourt), who has put his support behind me 110 percent, finally got to raise that trophy."



Dorrian Cohen said he was eschewing all the old valedictorian clichés in his speech because “We should enter the vestibule of our future with our heads straight forward, and the memories, support and guidance of Kennedy at our backs, to assist our forward trajectory.”



Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School



Virginia Capellupo gave the Invocation, thanking God for His Grace “which is greater than any hardship, including this virus” and for “unbreakable friendships and amazing memories.”



CLASS OF 2020



Salutatorian Daniel Savino drew upon both Emerson and Dr. Seuss as he reminded his classmates that “The world — and its betterment — is ours for the taking, as long as we put our minds to it.”





Although it was another Kennedy Commencement in a long line of spectacularly beautiful June Saturday ceremonies at St. Joseph's Church in Somers, it was a Graduation Day like no other. After spending months uncertain whether there would even be an in-person celebration due to pandemic restrictions, let alone what it might resemble, students and parents were delighted when Kennedy ingenuity (and the weather angels) delivered, big time. All the speeches, all the Pomp, and all the Circumstances of earlier years were there, just socially distanced and delivered on enormous flat screen monitors in the church parking lot.



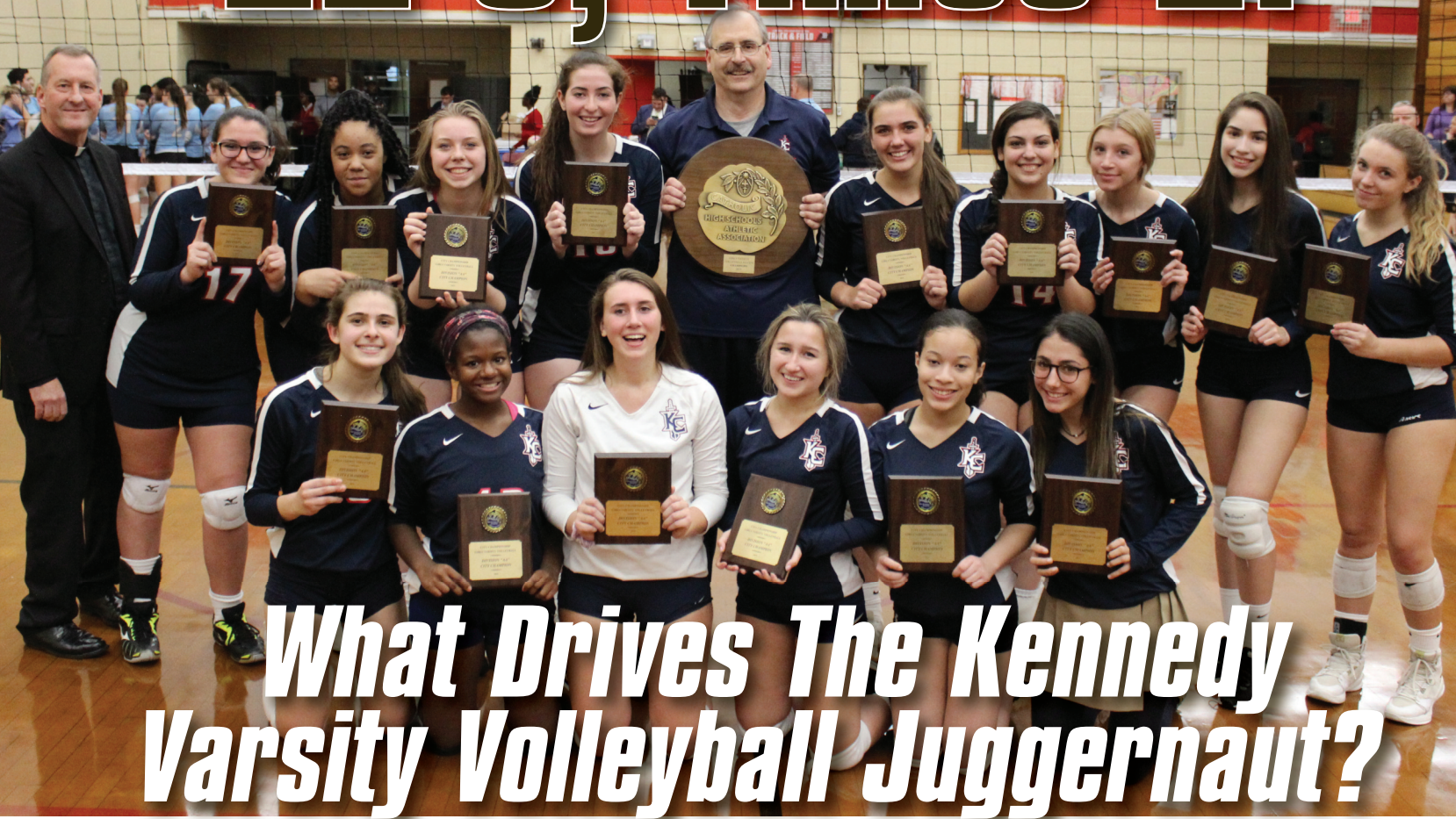


"Never let the future disturb you. You will meet it, if you have to, with the same weapons of reason which today arm you against the present." ~Marcus Aurelius





22-0, Times 2.



What Drives The Kennedy Varsity Volleyball Juggernaut?





Amid the growing culture of winning teams at Kennedy Catholic, varsity volleyball has been the winning-est. The team went 22-0 for two seasons straight, and last year the volleyball Gaels won the league, division and city championships, coming in second at the state level.

Steering the ship throughout the Gaels' climb into the upper strata has been Coach Tony Santora, who says a crucial component of the Gaels' success is old-fashioned respect and honesty.

"I talk to them, I tell them what I think, what position I think they should play," Santora said. "They give me input, I give them input, we mix it up, we put it together, and we form a team."

The coach said he approaches every new season prepared to just "work with what you have, not with what you wish you had," but the Fates have made that a winning proposition.

"I've been blessed with great athletes," the coach said. "That certainly helps."

It also helps that Santora has a knack for getting all those great athletes to check their egos and teen drama at the gym door.

"I have a phrase that I say: 'You don't have to love each other, you just have to get along with each other for two and a half hours a day,'" Santora said. "Volleyball is a total team sport."

Perhaps more than any other sport at the high school level. A fabulous quarterback on your football team or star center on your basketball squad can go a long way towards carrying your team to victory, but that's not how it works in volleyball.

"It's a fast sport," the coach said. "Every 30 seconds there's a ball going over the net. So if you're not in the game continuously, I have to do something, take you out, talk to you, maybe put you back in."

Making matters tougher still for any athletic coach at Kennedy is the high academic standards that aren't waived for star athletes on championship sports teams.

"I have to give all these students a chance to do academically what they are here to do," Santora said. "It's a privilege to play sports at Kennedy, but they're here for an education. That's the way it's supposed to be here, that's the way Father (Vaillancourt) wants it, that's the way it's going to be."

History has shown that when it comes to extra academic help needed after school, Kennedy's volleyball players are more likely to be on the giving, rather than the receiving, side. The Kennedy volleyball program is "blessed with very intelligent young ladies," Coach Santora said. "If they need help, academically, or they are tutoring someone else," that takes the priority.

If the distractions were only academic ones, Santora's job would be a lot easier. The girls on the team have a knack for taking care of their own, making a point of first helping other players on the team if they need academic help. "It's a family," the coach said.

But chemistry, calculus and European History are quite often the lightest problems weighing on a teen girl's mind.

"Outside of here, they have more stuff going on than the government," Santora said. "And you have to let them do things. I ask them, 'Is this more important than volleyball?' And to some it is. And you have to let them do it."

Of course, there are consequences, which may include reduced court time. Still, the coach doesn't twist any arms.

"I leave it solely up to them. I will not beg, plead or borrow for anybody to play a game if they don't want to be here."

It's a surprise that Santora does not have an extensive background in volleyball. He played in high school, and put his sneakers away until his daughter came to Kennedy. At that time, the school did not have a JV coach, so Santora volunteered. The rest is history.

His rediscovery of the sport to help his own daughter may be a big part of the reason Santora's earned a reputation as one of the more parent-friendly coaches at Kennedy.

"I love the parents who want to volunteer all the time," he said. "I will always find something for them to do."

But don't confuse accessibility with pushover-ability. "My parents know what I expect from them every year," Santora said, reciting: "Let the players play, let the refs ref, and let the coaches coach."

Lately there has been one thing volleyball parents can count on: their kids'll play. Consistently punishing the competition has given the coach a luxury most high school coaches of any sport don't enjoy.

"The players don't learn by sitting on the bench, and that's why I like to play everybody every game, and we can afford to that. As a 22-0 team, you can afford to play a lot of people who don't usually play."

Sure, but what about next year? The team lost six players to graduation — but they lost 10 players the previous year, and still came back 22-0.

"We'll be OK," the coach said. "I don't have a crystal ball. I don't know if we'll be 22-0."

If they're not, it won't be because they got soft during the off-season.

Santora offers every student who wants to play volleyball a workout during the summer, free of charge, three days a week.

Just like that famous West Coast hotel, you can graduate out of the Kennedy volleyball program, but you can never leave. Santora makes a point of tracking the post-Kennedy careers of his players, many of whom have gone on to volleyball success at the college level. "I worry about every kid that leaves this school who played for me, I want to make sure they are on the right track," he said. "Anybody playing on the college level, I'm going to look your stats up, I'm going to see how you're doing, and I'm going to text you and say, 'I'm here.'"





Kennedy 2020 *Students of Excellence*

The annual President's Dinner, where Kennedy normally honors its Students of Excellence, was COVID-canceled in 2020.

This year's crème de la crème was a diverse group that included cheerleaders, competitive robot builders, Eagle Scouts, ballet dancers, lacrosse players, science Olympians, costume designers, track stars, National Honor Society members and a disproportionately high number of Ultimate Frisbee players (what's up with that...?).

They spent countless volunteer hours tutoring and in service to their parishes, but also repairing homes in Appalachia and transporting patients in hospitals.

Now they are Kennedy ambassadors at such elite schools as Rochester Institute of Technology, Villanova, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Penn State, Worcester Polytechnic, Notre Dame and Loyola.

From neuroscience to musical theater, criminology to pre-med, and just about every flavor of engineering you can name, these students are pursuing studies that will enable them to make their indelible marks on the world. *Aut viam inveniam aut faciam!*

Father Vaillancourt

Joins Cardinal Dolan On The Radio To Discuss New Book

Kennedy Catholic's Fr. Mark Vaillancourt appeared on "Conversation with Cardinal Dolan" on The Catholic Channel on SiriusXM, earlier this year.

The Cardinal began the interview telling Vaillancourt, how proud of him he was, praising Kennedy's president and principal for being able to seamlessly combine both the "pastoral and the scholarly."

Fr. Vaillancourt, who is also an adjunct professor of dogmatic theology for St. Joseph's Seminary and a Latin teacher at Kennedy, was on the show to talk about his latest book, "On The Body and The Blood of the Lord, with Letter to Fredugard." The work is a translation from the Latin of the first monograph written on the Eucharist by the Carolingian theologian Paschasius Radbertus.

The translations shed substantial light on the development of the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. That's the key tenet of the faith that upholds when bread and wine are consecrated at Mass, there takes place a change in the whole substance of the bread and wine into the substance of Christ's body and blood.

Fr. Vaillancourt is an expert on the 11th century Berengarian heresy which attempted to refute transubstantiation doctrine. He told His Eminence that the work of Radbertus, writing in the 9th cen-

tury, was central to the Berengarian debate. Yet amazingly, this seminal volume of Eucharistic theology had never been translated into English before Fr. Vaillancourt's work.

By carefully parsing the Carolingian's Latin, and that of the Church scholars that followed him, Fr. Vaillancourt was able to trace the development of thought surrounding the idea the Body of the Eucharist is the same Body that hung upon the cross, rose again, and ascended into heaven.

...or as the Cardinal was quick to point out to listeners, "This ain't beach reading."

At the end of the interview, His Eminence inquired as to the health and mood of the student body, whose school year was upended by the coronavirus pandemic. Fr. Vaillancourt, who lamented the abrupt end to the athletic

season and disruptions to the end of year celebrations for the Class of 2020, explained how the school was able to "seamlessly switch over" to remote learning.

"On the Body and The Blood of the Lord with the Letter to Fredugard," by Paschasius Radbertus, translated and edited by Fr. Mark Vaillancourt, Ph.D., has been published by Brepols. It is part of their "Corpus Christianorum in Translation" series.



SAT Test Performance at Kennedy Catholic
Kennedy continues to rank among the highest in SAT scores in all the districts in the area.

School	County	Total	ERW	MATH
Scarsdale	Westchester	1357	668	689
Horace Greeley	Westchester	1337	661	676
Blind Brook (Rye)	Westchester	1304	653	651
Rye	Westchester	1260	631	629
Byram Hills	Westchester	1259	624	635
Briarcliff	Westchester	1257	625	632
John Jay (Katonah)	Westchester	1246	625	621
Rye Neck	Westchester	1231	611	620
Kennedy Catholic	Westchester	1224	617	607
Croton-Harmon	Westchester	1220	606	614
Pleasantville	Westchester	1218	604	614
Yorktown	Westchester	1218	598	620
Irvington	Westchester	1215	609	606
Rhinebeck Central School District	Dutchess	1215	610	605
Eastchester	Westchester	1201	595	606
Mamaroneck	Westchester	1193	598	595
Haldane Central School District	Putnam	1185	601	584
Arlington Central School District	Dutchess	1183	588	595
North Salem	Westchester	1177	586	591
Fox Lane	Westchester	1168	582	586
Dobbs Ferry	Westchester	1152	577	575
Pawling Central School District	Dutchess	1136	567	569
Putnam Valley Central School District	Putnam	1135	558	577
	20 The GAEL			

Somers	Westchester	1133	540	593
Harrison	Westchester	1130	562	568
Hendrick Hudson	Westchester	1128	564	564
Sleepy Hollow	Westchester	1128	601	527
Wappingers Central School District	Dutchess	1125	565	561
Westlake	Westchester	1125	570	555
Brewster Central School District	Putnam	1124	569	555
Carmel Central School District	Putnam	1124	565	558
Millbrook Central School District	Dutchess	1124	566	558
Mahopac Central School District	Putnam	1123	569	554
Lakeland	Westchester	1115	565	550
Walter Panas	Westchester	1115	565	550
Pine Plains Central School District	Dutchess	1103	564	539
Valhalla	Westchester	1094	553	541
New Rochelle	Westchester	1090	546	544
Tuckahoe	Westchester	1090	545	545
Hyde Park Central School District	Dutchess	1088	548	539
Ossining	Westchester	1083	545	538
Woodlands	Westchester	1080	543	537
Beacon City School District	Dutchess	1068	541	527
Dover Union Free School District	Dutchess	1067	541	526
White Plains	Westchester	1033	518	515
Port Chester	Westchester	1021	509	512
Alexander Hamilton	Westchester	1020	515	505
Peekskill	Westchester	982	491	491
Poughkeepsie City School District	Dutchess	970	495	475
Mount Vernon – All Schools	Westchester	941	482	459
Yonkers – All Schools	Westchester	926	475	451

Westchester County data from: Westchester Magazine, March 2020

Putnam and Dutchess County data from NewYorkUpstate.com

2 DAYS IN DC

Kennedy Pro-Life Club Marches On Washington



When President Donald Trump made history in January as the first President of the United States to appear at the National March for Life, Kennedy Catholic students were there.

"This one was unique in a lot of ways," said March veteran and Kennedy campus minister, Kyle MacDonald. "We decided early on to provide a more comprehensive experience for the students."

That meant two days spent in Washington, DC this year, trading the annual round trip bus ride for an overnight stay at a local hotel. The longer visit gave Kennedy students the opportunity to celebrate the National Vigil Mass for Life at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception the night before the March.

"I think it is the second largest Mass in the United States that is regularly celebrated," MacDonald said.

The first March for Life was Jan. 24, 1974, one year after the notorious Roe v. Wade Supreme Court ruling made abortion legal in the United States. The January crowds marching on the National Mall have swelled each year since. The Kennedy contingent, which included 7th and 8th graders from St. Patrick's in Yorktown Heights, numbered 50 students and eight chaperones.

"It was great for the kids to experience that there are that many people who are adamant about this cause," MacDonald said. "It was a wonderful testament to our belief that all life is sacred."

Before making their way to the National Mall and the President,

*"One thing that is mentioned
time and time again —
and President Trump mentioned it
as well — is that the generation
that is growing up now is more
pro-life than their parents."*

Kennedy students and wayfarers from all around the Empire State attended the "New York Pilgrim Mass," celebrated by Timothy Cardinal Dolan at St. Patrick's Church in Washington, DC.

What strikes many March-watchers is the overwhelming and growing number of young people who participate each year.

"One thing that is mentioned time and time again — and

President Trump mentioned it as well — is that the generation that is growing up now is more pro-life than their parents," said MacDonald. "That's a cause for hope. There are more young people involved in the movement."

MacDonald, who also teaches writing and theology at Kennedy, doesn't believe that any of the annual gains in the numbers of

marchers can be counted until the movement is "allowed to really penetrate our lives, so that it is not just one event a year." The pro-life cause must be "lived," MacDonald said, and not just an abstract thought that occupies us from time to time.

Abstract or not, it's an idea that's clearly gaining traction. In 2019, 58 pro-life laws were passed, including 25 that blocked the procedure to one degree or another, according to the pro-abortion Guttmacher Institute.

"Some of the shifts we have seen in politics over the past couple of years have given the sign that maybe these laws can change and maybe Roe v. Wade won't be that status quo in the future. There are definitely signs of hope."

The Journey, Continued:

Sister Mary

Blazes New Trails at Kennedy

Sr. Mary McCaffrey, who teaches theology at Kennedy, has that kind of “Jack of All Trades, Master of a Few of Them” resume that turns the heads of recruiters for Fortune 500 companies. She’s so good at what she does, in fact, that Kennedy Catholic’s hired her twice.

Born during the Great Depression, Sr. Mary entered the convent just after World War II, 73 years ago. That began a 45 year career in education, including a stint as principal of St. Clare Academy in Hastings. She thought she was going to be an education lifer, but her order had other plans. It saw fit to retrain her for hospital administration, after which she settled into residency at North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset, NY.

“And then I went to St. Francis Hospital in Poughkeepsie to run that, and I thought I was going to be there for life,” she told *The Gael*. But after three years she was elected Superior General of her community, and served two terms. She says she went back to working in hospitals “because they spent so much money training me for that type of work.”

Through it all she couldn’t wait to get back to high schools, she said. So when the opportunity arose to come to Kennedy in 1998, she jumped at it. Her first run here lasted until 2013.

Sr. Mary, a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann communities, retired in 2013, or tried to, anyway. She says she left because “the students needed someone younger.” Along with immersing herself in a variety of volunteer work at Hudson Valley Hospital, she taught CCD at Theresa of Avila in Sleepy Hollow.

For the first four years of her “retirement,” Sr. Mary said she would wake up the first day of school and say “Ah! Two more hours of sleep!”

Then: “On the fifth year I woke up and said, ‘Oh! I wish I was going back to Kennedy.’”

She said she wondered if God wasn’t trying to tell her something, and after praying on it for a few weeks, she determined



that He was. She returned to Kennedy in 2018.

Quite a bit changed at the school during her absence she said, but the “family spirit” is still here, “as it was back in the 90s.”

Sr. Mary said Kennedy has become “much more academic” now compared to her first tenure with the school, and much more invested in technology. In fact, it was all that new tech that gave her the most pause when she was wrestling with the decision to come back.

Another change she said she noticed right away was that “the whole school seems to have been revamped — it’s now almost like a college.”

Kennedy may be a new world, but Sr. Mary sees it as a place to pay some old debts.

“I still have more to give, and I have to answer for all the gifts that God has blessed me with,” she said. “I have been blessed beyond belief, and I didn’t want to sit home and do nothing.”



Kennedy Catholic 38th Annual Auction

About 150 guests attended the 38th Annual Kennedy Catholic Auction last November.

Items on the block included the standard baskets of wine bottles all the way up through a trip to the HF Bar Ranch, situated on 7,500 acres bordering Bighorn National Forest in Saddlestring, Wyoming.

Dinner and complimentary drinks, a mix of silent and live auctions, Sr. Barbara's Money Tree, a 50/50 Raffle, and even more ways to win kept guests entertained throughout the evening.

Most importantly, the event took in about \$90,000 in receipts.



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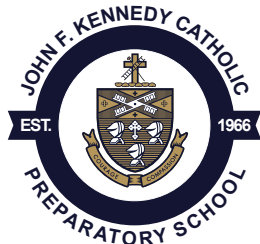
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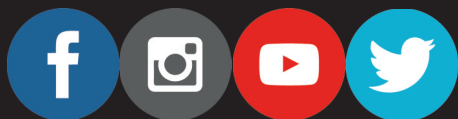
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Golf Classic
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