

**Please Add the Date and Volume/Issue:**

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## **Brother Rice Leads Immigration Conference**

*-Thane Hall. Brother Rice, Michigan*



Before the COVID-19 virus shut down schools, Guillermo, Malcom, and Nico, alums of the Brownsville immersion trip, and Colin, ACTION alum and 6 other students from Brother Rice High School helped to lead a conference on the topic of Immigration entitled, **Youth Leaders Across Borders**. 10 Catholic High Schools and over 120 students gathered at Cristo Rey High School in Detroit to discuss, listen and brainstorm our response to immigration and immigrants. We were joined by two young people from Mexico and one from El Salvador. Each young person lived in the United States for years before being deported back to their country of origin.

The day was situated on a foundation of Catholic Social Teaching and presentations were led on "Our Immigration Story," "Climate Driven Immigration" and "Youth Leaders Doing Great Things." Our three guests described their journeys to the US, their lives here and their lives after deportation. This allowed the students to talk about each of their own personal family immigration stories. It was during this presentation that Guillermo, Malcolm and Nico gave their testimonies about their work in Brownsville, TX and how it touched their hearts as they ministered to refugees at the border. Nico who participated in Brownsville '18 was able to explain how the new policy of "Stay in Mexico" which keeps the refugees waiting in Mexico for their immigration appointments has truly brought to a trickle, the number of refugees coming to the immigration shelters.

Our next presentation looked at how changes in our environment, especially global warming has an immense impact on immigration. Our day ended with a presentation on "Youth Leaders Doing Great Things." Our invited guest talked about how they have established peace initiatives in Mexico and El Salvador to reduce violence in their communities. Each school was then tasked with finding ways that they could get more involved with the journeys of immigrants. The day was co-sponsored by Strangers No Longer, a local Immigration Advocacy Group and Alianza Americas, a transnational coalition of immigrant organizations in the US, Mexico and Central America. The day ended with many of the schools pledging to work together to bring awareness to the plight of the refugee and immigrant. The hearts of our young Brother Rice students are still burning within them as they recounted their encounter with Christ with the refugees that they ministered to in Brownsville and locally in Detroit.





## Vancouver College Peru Immersion Carson, Student at Vancouver College

On the morning of March 7th, when our group arrived at Vancouver International Airport, we didn't *really* know what to expect. Up until this point, myself, 11 other students, and 3 teachers had applied and been selected to embark on Vancouver College's Faith In Action trip to Peru. For many months, we had held meetings, organized fundraisers, raised awareness, and volunteered in an attempt to prepare us for what we would experience in South America. I think we would have been astounded in normal circumstances, even without the looming pandemic.

Upon arriving in Lima, we were thrust immediately into action. With the help of Brother Stephen Casey - the organizer and leader for our trip and dozens of others - we undertook the task of building a house in the hills of Peru's capital. We spent six days flattening terrain, drinking water, carrying buckets, pouring concrete, drinking more water, raising walls, assembling a roof, and painting until, finally, our efforts were brought to fruition. Throughout this time, we experienced the neighbourhoods and markets of Lima, as well as a local school run by the Christian Brothers. These experiences really connected us with these people and allowed us to pour every fibre of our being into the work we were doing. Spending the week working together with a mother named Tania and her family was truly a fulfilling experience for our whole group - seeing a family so happy and caring, even in the harshest of conditions really impacted us and will stick with all of us for the rest of our lives.

Having concluded our work, we left the sweltering coast and travelled inland (and upward) to the city of Cusco. We spent a few days in the so-called "sacred valley" as tourists, learning about the culture of Peru and the Inca Empire. It was upon returning to our hotel in Ollantaytambo from the heights of Machu Picchu where we heard the news: Peru would be closing its borders with immediate effect. Upon hearing the news, our group experienced a range of emotions, we were worried, we were frightened, and many of us felt helpless. At this point Mrs. Vernier, Mr. Legge, Mrs. Robles, and Mr. Knorr stepped in to battle our way out of this unprecedented situation. While we were off watching Peruvian television and playing progressively-stranger card games, our teachers were waiting by their phones, keeping in constant contact with our families back home, the school administration, the government, and various news sources. It became very surreal very quickly as hours turned to days and days to weeks. After about two weeks, we began the long, heavily delayed, and arduous journey back to Canada. I'll never forget the moment that I saw my dad from across the baggage terminal, and it was certainly difficult to isolate myself for 14 days in our basement before I could see my parents again.

After the mental challenge of enduring a Peruvian quarantine, I've taken the time to focus on the actual meaning of our trip. Despite getting a little sidetracked along the way, it really hits home how fortunate we are - especially during times like these - and the lessons we all learned in Peru will certainly not be forgotten. I personally would like to thank a long list of people: our team of teachers, our Principals Mr. Weaver and Mr. Bevacqua, our parents and families, several Members of Parliament, Chris Gailus and the local media, the hotel staff in Cusco and

Ollantaytambo, as well as everyone back home. Finally, I think I can speak for my fellow students in acknowledging that the education gained and values developed from Vancouver College helped prepare us for not only the challenge we travelled to Peru to take on, but also the unforeseen adversity we faced. It is great to be home.



## NEW REALITIES IN ERCBNA SCHOOLS

*Over nearly the past two months, ERCBNA schools across the Province have had to adapt to the new realities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. These are the ways that students, staff and communities are continuing to serve and advocate despite the lockdown:*



**Tampa Catholic**  
*Jina Masters*

Tampa Catholic Crusaders, like everyone else, have had to get creative in order to live out service to the community these days. Several of our students have, independently, purchased fabric and used their sewing skills to make homemade masks for the elderly in our area. Masks have been donated to hospitals and nursing homes. One of our seniors, Cassidy, researched the process and learned how to use a sewing machine for the first time! She successfully produced 40 masks and drove them to Rocky Creek, the local assisted living facility we typically visit monthly. Charity, initiative, and new life skills are all on display in Tampa Bay :) We think Blessed Edmund must be proud. Live Jesus in our Hearts, Forever!



**Palma School**  
Mia Mirassou, Jim Micheletti

Palma School has stepped up deliveries to the homeless— in person, on the street—while honoring social distancing. Students and parents have delivered tons of goods to the Blessed Edmund Rice Chapel. Once collected, faculty members deliver to our brothers and sisters on the street; growing in number and in fear. The virus has further marginalized the marginalized in fear of these “lepers” who are deemed contagious. The Palma family is grateful for those dedicated to the dignity of all people.





## IONA PREP

Many Iona Prep students are using their skills and passions to serve those in need during the COVID-19 pandemic. Below are some examples of how students are continuing to serve from home:

### ZACH '20

Zach spent his break and now is spending his time after e-learning, helping with an important cause. The summer camp he works at, Discover Camp in Hawthorne, has 3D printers that they use during the summer. Zach is a counselor at the camp and became the 3D printer "technician" last summer, helping to maintain and repair 50+ 3D printers. The teachers that run the camp decided to put those printers to use creating much needed face shields for hospital workers and first-responders. They created a Go Fund Me and have raised over \$65,000. This is a post from Discover Camp, showing how Zach has still been assisting from home during the pandemic.



Here is a link to the Go Fund Me page raising money for protective equipment: [Go Fund Me](#)

### Benny '22

**Benny** coded-from scratch- a website that pairs people in need /immunocompromised senior citizens living in the Village Green condo complex, with volunteers who can go out and run errands for them. He was inspired by thinking about what his grandmother would need and expanded it out to serve his neighbors. The condo complex has 90 units.

The project took him many hours and required many versions to get it the way he wanted it. The senior citizens there are now posting requests and volunteers are taking the orders!

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins has invited him to join her Youth Council. Her letter is below:

Dear Benny,

I was so impressed to hear about the website you created to help seniors who live in the Village Green. You ran with an idea, made it work and even got approval from your Condo Board. Now, thanks to your wonderful efforts, seniors in your condo who need outside assistance can get it from the volunteers you've connected them to. The volunteers are also to be commended.

You are an outstanding example of a community minded, compassionate young person. And you are just the kind of teen I would like to have on my Youth Advisory Council.

The Youth Advisory Council is made up of promising young leaders from across my district who are civically minded. The council will advise me on issues that matter to young people and also work on key advocacy and civic engagement projects. I would like to extend an invitation to you to serve on this council as soon as it is able to hold its first meeting. A member of my staff will provide more information on the first council meeting as the time approaches.

Best of luck to you.

Sincerely,



Andrea Stewart-Cousins  
NYS Senator, District 35  
President Pro Tem, Majority Leader

## **Kaidi & Charles '21**

When Kaidi and Charles heard from their parents in China that they were shipping them medical supplies, they contacted Iona Prep to see how we could use the supplies. The Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be donated to the medical staff at White Plains Hospital for use treating COVID-19 patients.



## DISTANCED LIVING

-Br. Arthur Williams, Guadalupe Regional Middle School

***While Edmund Rice schools and students have adjusted to learning at home over the past few weeks, many fellow Edmund Rice students at Guadalupe Regional Middle School in Brownsville, Texas have had to deal with different circumstances and challenges. Brother Arthur Williams shares how Guadalupe and its students have been coping with the new realities created by COVID-19.***

Greetings from South Texas. We have been doing a lot of behind the scenes stuff with our students since March 13. Our students were already on Spring Break when the pandemic caused closures. Our families are not financially able to plan a vacation to some exotic place so most remained at home. As of that time, the city of Brownsville had begun self-imposed restrictions. The governor here did not promulgate any restrictions until early April. Local towns and county governments have had to take the lead in these early stages. We, therefore, have had 'shelter in place' here in Brownsville and now Cameron county for the past couple of weeks. At this time, all schools are now closed until at least the beginning of May.

Before the start of spring break, March 13, we assembled our students in the cafeteria and had them get all their books. We then handed out individual assignments sheets for at least the week following Spring Break. Last week we expanded this by having a 'drive by' pickup of another weeks assignments. We have a small, but significant, number of students who have no internet or computer available to them. For these students, teachers are preparing hard copy work that they can do. We are also being told to be sure to have work that the students can access from their textbooks. No multiple page projects to be run off from the copy machine!

We are offering parents the opportunity to do drive-by drop-offs of written work. A number of teachers continue to post assignments online which most students can complete their work and return it online. Yet the struggles of our families include not having amenities that many are accustomed to. A major concern regarding internet usage is that some families have limited internet plans and access. We are very much aware of the resources that our families have access to. I, fortunately, only have a small 8th grade algebra class for which all have a computer and internet service. Our struggle to provide support for these families and their children continue.

Dr. Miller, our principal, has been in contact with all of our families by letter, email and personal phone calls. We will be reaching with our limited 'food bank' products and offer them to our families most in need. As this looks as if we are in for the longer haul,

we hope to provide some small service to them if only it is in providing school work around which these children can plan their day and be engaged. Students have also received a suggested daily schedule for planning their day, thanks to the organizational skills and thinking of Dr. Miller.

Our school motto is "College and Heaven." Our proposed daily schedule opens and closes each day with a time for prayer. I am thinking about how to make this work on a more formal level. We continue to pray, for all of you who are in the 'hot zones', as well as for our local, state, and federal leader struggling to deal with this epidemic. Our prayers extend, of course, to our local bishops, priests, and deacons who keep the light of the gospel before us.

We pray for the intercession of Mary, our Mother, that through this we may be all drawn closer to God.

**Pictured Right:**

GRMS has been working hard to do distanced learning with families in need. The Post it Notes describe the ways in which GRMS staff have been serving students and their families. The family shown (middle picture) lives a few blocks away from the school. The two oldest students, Andrea and Nestor, are in 7th and 6th grades.

**The New Normal**  
Guadalupe Regional Middle School

All schools in the Diocese of Brownsville will remain closed for the 2019-2020 school year, but instruction continues.

We are working with families to provide distance learning. Though not all our students have internet access or a device, we are in regular contact with families to provide ongoing, personalized accommodations. Please pray for them during these difficult times.

Here are some of the ways GRMS is helping families:

- Electronic Devices Issued to Families (Netbooks, iPads...)
- Weekly Learning Packets Distributed
- Option for Assignments Upload or Drop-Off
- Supplemental Zoom Meetings with Students
- Weekly Faculty/Staff Zoom Meetings + Check-Ins
- Food Pantry Distribution
- Social Media Engagement
- Teacher Zoom "Office" Hours for Students

## **THE IMPOSSIBLE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED: WHAT CORONAVIRUS CAN TEACH US ABOUT HOPE (THE GUARDIAN)**

Brother Michael Maher shared the following article, which reminds us of the ways in which the current pandemic can rekindle hope.

“Already there is a yearning to discover some seed for a new vision of society and even humanity from the devastation of the Coronavirus. Here’s a link to a refreshing assessment of the potential for hope from the virus, deadly though it may be. “We have reached a crossroads, we have emerged from what we assumed was normality, things have suddenly overturned. One of our main tasks now – especially those of us who are not sick, are not frontline workers, and are not dealing with other economic or housing difficulties – is to understand this moment, what it might require of us, and what it might make possible.” Solnit offers a pointed analysis of the lessons from this pandemic for our economic, political and social lives together. A starred recommendation for all.”

**[LINK TO ARTICLE](#)**

### **Alerts**

#### **[Laudato Si’ Fifth Anniversary](#)**

A resource for learning about and taking action for the upcoming fifth anniversary of Pope Francis’ Laudato Si’.

#### **[Alerts/ Links for Blessed Edmund Rice’s Feast Day \(Founder’s Day\)](#)**

**[A video message from ERCBNA Province Leader Br. Kevin Griffith](#)**

**[Resources to celebrate Founder’s Day](#)**

### **Links**

#### **[Earth Day Resources](#)**

In case you missed Earth Day, please find resources here.

**[Carbon Rangers- Coronavirus Edition](#)**

**[Edmund Rice International April Newsletter](#)**

