

# The Pandemic Review

December 2020/January 2021 - Mia Abate

Student life, both physical and virtual



## Back to the Books

With 2021 upon us and Christmas break behind us, it is now time to settle back into the school routine. Things have changed over the two weeks we've been away but no matter what is thrown at them, the Fighting Irish will continue to conquer it with their determination and positive attitudes. As Covid-19 numbers continue to rise, it is important to remember to wash your hands, wear a mask and follow social distancing protocols to keep everyone safe.

## Irish Miracle

The St. Pat's tradition known as "Irish Miracle" was reimagined in a covid-friendly way in its 37th year. In a normal year, students canvas Sarnia and neighbouring cities, going door to door collecting non-perishable food items. The food collected is normally donated to St. Vincent de Paul and benefits the needy within our parishes. This year, with church halls closed and

students unable to go door to door, St. Pat's and St. Vincent de Paul raised money, allowing people to donate from the safety of their own homes. Martina Austin is a teacher at St. Pat's and one of the organizers of Irish Miracle with 21 years of volunteer experience with the drive. Austin had this to say when asked about why Irish Miracle is important to the school: "We're doing what Jesus did, helping just because it's the right thing to do treating others as the body of Christ within the body of Christ." The money raised provided grocery/gift cards for families so they could buy what they needed for



their families. Money that wasn't used for the cards was used to purchase more food to stock the food bank. "Thank you so much for your generosity over 37 years" said Mrs. Austin "but thank you especially for this year. In a time when some money, food and resources have been tough, people have been asked to give so many times and yet they just keep giving. St. Patrick's and St. Vincent de Paul have raised a combined total of \$21,971.55 to benefit local families.



## Vatican Observatory Q&A

On December 9th, staff and students of St. Patrick's High School and the virtual school were given the opportunity to speak with Brother Guy Consolmagno, the Director of the Vatican Observatory. Brother Consolmagno is a planetary scientist whose primary areas of research are

asteroids and meteorites. Brother Consolmagno shared a bit about his life, his time at MIT and abroad. He also answered questions posed to him by staff and students such as "Are science and faith mutually exclusive?", "What are black holes?", "Why were we given free will?" and "What would the existence of alien life mean to Christianity?" Brother Consolmagno who has written books such as *Brother Astronomer* (2000), *God's Mechanics: How Scientists and Engineers Make Sense of Religion* (2008) and *Would You Baptize an Extraterrestrial?* (2014) was able to answer the questions with his studies and personal anecdotes. Thank you Brother Consolmagno for sharing your knowledge with us.

## E-Learning

Certainly one of the biggest things to have happened during these months is the provincewide temporary switch to virtual learning. Mr. Kehoe, the principal of St. Patrick's had this to say about the switch to virtual learning: "The transition to on-line was very smooth. Aside from a province wide internet outage on the first day, teachers and students have been successfully engaged in on-line teaching



and learning. We were able to support students who did not have technology as early as the first day back (Monday, January 4th) so that everyone has been able to access their education.” In school learning is projected to be able to resume on Monday, January 25, 2021.



## Academic Awards

On Wednesday, December 16th, St. Patrick's held their Academic Awards Day in the cafeteria. Students who attend school in person were encouraged to dress up that day and award winners were called to the cafeteria in small groups (within their cohort) to receive their award and have their photo taken. Virtual students were given the opportunity to pick up their awards that evening. Academic Awards Day celebrates those students who have achieved honour roll, Ontario scholar or

other such awards. Congratulations to all of the 2020 winners and thank you to all the staff who made this day possible. (Pictured above: Grade 12 student, Maddison Miller who was a recipient of honour roll in addition to winning Top Student, the Worley Award of Excellence, the drama award and the religion award.)

## Gifts for Kids

St. Patrick's leadership class found a way to help others during the Christmas season by collecting, wrapping and delivering Christmas gifts. The gifts were donated through the Salvation Army and were distributed to 30 children throughout the Sarnia-Lambton area who were in need. Anna Koziol, a grade 12 student in Mr. Walicki's leadership class had this to say about the project: "We held a crazy hat day that ended up raising about \$620 to buy toys for kids that weren't getting any this Christmas season. Being able to take this money and buy these toys was truly an amazing experience. Just knowing that these kids are going to enjoy their Christmas even more now is something I will treasure for the rest of my life."







## New News

Mr. Walicki and his students are putting together a 3D virtual tour of St. Patrick's. [Click here](#) to see their 3D capture of the Academic Award speeches! St. Patrick's librarians, Mrs. Cole and Ms. Scott have put together 2 new virtual libraries, one for December and one for January. The December library is themed around Christmas with links to Christmas movies, plays and a "name that tune challenge". The January edition includes recipes, craft ideas and a book

quote challenge. [Click here](#) to view the December library and [click here](#) to view the January virtual library. Quadmester 3, period 1 is due to begin on February 8th and Quadmester 3, period 2 on February 16th.

## Closing Thoughts

It goes without saying that 2020 was a very dark time for most people, all across the world. We faced many frightening challenges both individually and as a global community. In times like these, it is very easy to surrender and allow ourselves to be swallowed by the darkness and the despair, but with 2021 upon us, we must walk on with hope in our hearts, remembering that we never walk alone. For as it is said in Deuteronomy 31:8 "It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

