

The Excalibur

The Online Nazareth RHS Student Newspaper



Father Mendez Celebrates Mass in the Chapel

Lent - A Season for Change

By: Demetria Baptiste

Lent is the season in the Christian liturgical calendar that leads up to the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday. Lent lasts forty days, the same amount of time Jesus spent in the desert, beginning on Ash Wednesday and ending on Holy Saturday. Many Christians fast or give something up as this is a season of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving.

Lent is important to me because it is the season leading up to our Lord's suffering, death, and resurrection. It is a solemn time of reflection and gives us time to be with those closest to us as we reflect. My family celebrates Lent by attending the Lenten services and giving something up for the forty days. This year my mother and I gave up fast food. We also use this as a time to show hospitality and help others. One year we spent time at a nursing home with its residents. We celebrate Easter by attending the Easter mass and then having dinner together.

Dynamic Catholic, a Christian website, shares daily videos during Lent to encourage thoughtful prayer. A point that resonated with me was that it is not about who you are at the beginning of Lent but who you become. May we all change for the better by turning to God, who accepts everyone regardless of who they are, what they have done before, or when they are turning to Him.

I recently decided to change for the better by strengthening my own relationship with God. God has been very active in my life and I firmly believe I would have nothing without Him. Despite not putting as much effort as I should into my relationship with God, He has never given up on me and always welcomes me with open arms. Since I started to make this change, my life has improved significantly, and I am beginning to understand how true happiness is rooted in my relationship with God.

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Easter Edition

Celebrate the
resurrection of
our Lord!

Happy
EASTER



- Special Events -

- 2/17 Ash Wednesday
- 2/24 Black History Month
Assembly
- 3/12 Senior Hall of Fame
- 3/19 Career Day
- 3/23 Underclassmen Awards
- 3/28 Palm Sunday
- 3/30 Women's History Month
Assembly
- 3/31 Stations of the Cross
- 4/4 Easter Sunday

Remote and In-Person Learning: A Student's Perspective

By: Courtney Bentham

The bell rings. Your principal starts speaking and you expect to hear the end-of-the-day announcements. Instead, you hear “due to the pandemic, we will be having online classes next week.” “Woohoo! No school!” Who would have thought that we would still be having online classes a year later.

Online classes may seem to have more positive than negative aspects. “You get to stay home away from school, what’s the big deal?” The “big deal” is that staying home for online classes negatively affects one’s mind and body in several ways. The first negative aspect is exposure to the blue light emitted by computers, not usually a big problem. The problem begins when we factor in the amount of time we use computers for online classes, typically six or more hours a day. This level of exposure to blue light can destroy or “shred” one’s eyes.

Another harmful effect of staying at home is that students do not often see the need to go outside, leading to vitamin D deficiency, which causes one’s health to deteriorate. Staying at home also makes students lazy, no matter how hard that may be to admit. When students get a notification from Google Classroom, the first reaction may be “Ugh, more work?” They may turn their notifications off, blocking their access to upcoming events and opportunities. This, in turn, can cause students to become reclusive, leading to social anxiety when they do come back to school.

Another negative aspect of remote learning is that students can be so easily distracted when they are at home. In-person learning is simply better than online classes because it

creates the atmosphere most students need to succeed in school. Being in school allows students to interact more effectively with their teachers and classmates, both receiving needed help and helping others. It also allows students to focus more easily when they are taking tests.

Of course, online classes do have several positive aspects. The most important one is keeping students safe during a pandemic. One could also see some of the negative aspects in a different light. Instead of staying at home being detrimental to students’ mental health, it could help them by giving them more time to relax. This benefit, however, is only feasible if the student is naturally conscientious. They would only have more time to relax if doing their assignments on time is second-nature for them.

Another positive aspect is that remote learning can provide more opportunities for engagement through online games. Some teachers like to play learning games such as Kahoot more often. Also, more teachers now give “open-web tests,” reducing test anxiety. With more time at home, students can more easily work on their personal craft. For example, if a student wants to learn Korean, they have plenty of time to do so. Also, students do not have to go out and buy expensive supplies as they can use Google Docs for note taking.

Ideally, I would like to have everyone learning in person. Human beings are social creatures, so being at home away from others is, quite literally, betraying our biology. However, because of the ongoing pandemic, I would recommend a



mix of remote learning and in-person learning. I would strongly encourage in-person learning if possible. Lab demonstrations would take place again, keeping in mind all the safety precautions. Students would also have to come to in-person classes if they want to practice for their respective sport after school. There would be so many incentives to come to school that a student would no longer even want to stay home. Students at home would sense the energy and vitality of the in-person learning environment and think, “I should come into school too!” I earnestly hope that more and more students can return to in-person learning, and at the same time I am thankful for the opportunity that remote learning has provided for us to continue our education while staying safe.

Amanda Gorman: Anything is Possible!

By: Sephora Vixama

“My mantra is: ‘I’m the daughter of Black writers who are descended from Freedom Fighters who broke their chains and changed the world,’” said Amanda Gorman during an interview with Michelle Obama. This interview was after the Inauguration day of Joe Biden in January 2021, where the first national youth laureate read her encouraging poem “The Hill We Climb.” It is a hopeful poem of learning from our history and slowly bettering the nation. Her references to race and justice connect to what Black History Month is for us: honoring the contributions that African Americans have made to our nation. As we celebrate Black History Month in February and Women’s History Month in March, Gorman is an outstanding example of a young leader for blacks, women, and the new generation.

Black History Month and Women’s History Month remind us of the struggles for justice and equality of those who have paved the way for us. We remember Harriet Tubman, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and Langston Hughes. What about the younger generation? As we continue to honor the ones who have laid the foundation, is it not our time to start fighting for our rights? Do not those now leading the way like Amanda Gorman also deserve some recognition? Especially now when covert racism is rising to the surface again, we need all the help we can get.

Something seemingly as little as instilling hope and confidence makes a difference! Things such as “pep talks” with peers or reassurance when faced with the odds can help immensely, especially if it comes from someone who looks like you and shares the same experience. This is where Gorman comes in with her heartening words, which build a sense of community and confidence: “Somehow we weathered and witnessed a nation that isn’t broken, but simply unfinished. We, the successors of a country and a time where a skinny Black girl descended from slaves and raised by a single mother can dream of becoming president, only to find herself reciting for one.”

Gorman provides encouragement for blacks and girls and shows us what is possible. She embraces that she is a black girl from a harsh background, descended from slaves and growing up with a single parent. This allows her to form a connection with others who have single parents, who are black, and who are girls. This allows the listener to realize that they can also achieve the position that Amanda Gorman is in, building connection and community.

We also have young people at Nazareth who are community builders. For example, Emily Florvil, the point guard of the girl’s varsity basketball team for three years, was the student director of this year’s Black History Month presentation. As the photo below shows, Emily also played an important role in the Women’s History Month presentation.



Let's hear what Emily has to say about her experience and what community means to her:

Question: I'm not sure if students here usually like picking out a leadership role for projects like this! A bold move IMO. What led you into deciding to direct the black history month show?

“This directing thing was unexpected and wasn’t planned at all. It started as me just being a host and then getting more involved to get things moving. I didn’t choose this role at all but in the end, I’m glad it went this way. It was (Continued on p. 4)

Amanda Gorman (cont.)

overwhelming at first. So many things had to be done and we had so many ideas and just couldn't figure out how to turn it into something that would be appealing to our audience and at the same time bring out our overall message. Being in a position like this was natural to me but then again not at all. In basketball, I have to be a leader on the court but this time I had to be a leader behind the scenes and on set. So it was a bit different."

Question: How was the process? Did you learn anything new, or pick up on anything that may have had an emotional connection with you?

"I did a lot from writing parts of the script to helping with transitions, suggesting ideas, spicing up some of our scenes and so much more. As I was working on the show, I was sitting through it, grasping information just like the audience was. It was a long process, but I would do it all over again. One of the biggest things I learned was how much effort goes into putting on programs like this for the school. Students only see the great result, but the process is something I've learned to admire as well. I found out so much more about my crew and their abilities. The talent we have at Nazareth is amazing and it is surprising how much we can shine off the big screen, without the stage lights."

Question: What is your opinion about the protests that have been happening, police brutality, and similar issues?

"With all the things happening with police brutality and more, I was just disgusted. I was ashamed to be a part of this country as history was continuing to repeat itself. I strongly believe that all lives can't matter until black lives matter. The way the black community is treated in America is outrageous and change is overdue."

Question: What does community mean to you? What does the Naz community mean to you?

"To me community means unity. Everyone coming together and representing one thing. The Nazareth community means a lot to me. It represents family and just a type of love you won't find anywhere else."

Creativity at Naz: Let Fine Arts Shine!

By: Daniel Korede

You may remember the Fine Arts program that was hosted virtually in December. Normally if we were still in the building, we would have the show in person and we would get to see all these performances in "real life." However, circumstances restricted events such as this one to the screens of our electronic devices. There is no doubt that the Nazareth school community is filled with many creative and talented individuals, ranging from young artists to painters, writers, musicians, actors, and filmmakers. Currently it is only during online events such as the virtual fine arts program that we get a chance to see the artistic side of our students.

We need more opportunities to display and celebrate the school's collective creativity. We need to build more participation in clubs and activities like the Art Club, which currently only has a few regular attendees.

We live in a culture that places high value and recognition on self expression, and young people tend to embody these values. Because of the restrictions of the pandemic, it has been more difficult to get involved in creative activities, particularly those involving music and the performing arts, since these are meant to be enjoyed within the school, not on a distance learning platform.

Hopefully as time goes on and we are back in the building, we can allow more students to get their creative juices flowing in a regular school environment!



Sports Are Back!

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

By: Emily Florvil

Being back at school in-person after many months of being home has been a great experience, especially now that more of our sports teams are starting to practice. Basketball has always been one of the things that pushed me to love school. Now that we have been able to practice so much, it has pushed me to be more involved in school.

Because students participating in sports are now coming to school on practice days, the school has been livelier. I look forward to coming to school knowing that my teammates will be there. It has been a hard time dealing with everything going in the world and I can say basketball has kept me and the other girls sane. We are always excited to be with each other in the gym, pushing each other to be better. It feels a little close to normal getting to walk to my classes and see my teammates and joke around. It almost feels like life before the pandemic.

The girls' basketball program makes me feel right at home in Nazareth. Although we are a small group, the love is for sure big! Suicides and 17s aren't so bad when you're surrounded by people who are working towards something to better themselves. Since I'm a senior this year, it has been tough trying to stay positive knowing eventually I'll have to leave. The girls' basketball program has been a big part of my amazing experience here. Although my time is running out, it has been one heck of a ride!

BOYS' BASKETBALL

By: Malik Bailey

Playing Basketball for Nazareth has been one of the best experiences I have had in my life. It has been an amazing experience because I get to play my favorite sport, which I care about so much, for my school.

While playing basketball for Nazareth I have had the luxury of being able to travel and play other schools. This has been so "cool" because I get to go travel with some of my best friends and I get to compete against other schools.

Being able to participate in basketball for Nazareth has also boosted my grades because I now have even more motivation to do well. I will not be allowed to play if my grades are not high enough!

During this pandemic year it has been so great to come back to school to practice with my teammates, and I am so excited to hear that our spring season is about to begin.



Sports Are Back!

FOOTBALL

By: Jamil Charles

“Even the darkest night will end, and the sun will rise” (Victor Hugo).

In February of 2020, we heard that Covid-19 had entered the United States. I did not think anything of it because at that time this news did not seem to affect us. All I kept thinking about was the start of football practice and being prepared for my senior year of high school. The closure of the schools in New York came as a surprise to me in March. I just wanted to go back to football and be with my friends, teachers, and classmates. Even though the schools shut down, my mind was still in the game, but I did not think that I was going to be able to go back to school to play. It made me

sad to think that I was not going to be able to play my last year of high school football.

The announcement of Governor Cuomo allowing participation in high risk sports this season made me happy. I was excited to come back to school, play, and live the normal life before Covid-19, but with masks. Even though it feels different, it still feels good to be around my teammates, coaches, and teachers. My overall mental state has improved. Coming back to football practice made me realize the bigger picture of sports. It teaches discipline, hard work, and how to cope with the success and failure that we will face in life.



Cheerleading was the first sport to resume in person practices.



The Excalibur Staff



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