

# The Excalibur

The Online Nazareth RHS Student Newspaper



## In Person Again!

By: Sephora Vixama

Welcome home Nazareth students! Welcome back to the home of the Kingsmen! How was your year and a half of remote and hybrid learning? And now, how is your first year back in the maroon and yellow halls of Nazareth? It's already December when you see Christmas trees decorated in each classroom. It really sets up the Christmas mood, huh? Speaking of mood, why don't we speak about the school atmosphere here at Naz?

Starting off with the first day of "offline" school, everyone was feeling a bit weird. Seeing so many people at once after almost two years of being mostly at home was intense. Hearing the announcements at the beginning of the second period felt odd. At first, we didn't have a homeroom period, so we'd have lunch period and after school times to reconnect with our friends.

That first day we walked into classrooms with plexiglass screen protectors on three sides of each desk. To some, they're an important safety measure. To others, they're an inconvenience because it can be hard to hear teachers and other students speaking, especially through their masks. The screens are also in the cafeteria with only two students per table, so if you'd like to speak with a friend you have to sit at opposite ends of a table with a screen between you. If you sit in the back of a class, the light from the window might reflect off the plexiglass and make it difficult to see the board. Some teachers still use Zoom and "share their screen" so you can easily see everything on your Chromebook and use the group chat to share ideas with each other.

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Nov/Dec 2021 – Issue 1

Thanksgiving/Christmas  
Holiday Edition



### - Special Events -

- 9/17 Opening Mass
- 10/7 Virtual College Fair
- 10/19 Hispanic Heritage Celebration
- 11/10 Multicultural Day
- 11/24 Thanksgiving Mass
- 11/29 – 12/3 Ryken Week
- 12/9 Fine Arts Program
- 12/22 Christmas Prayer Service

# A Light in the Darkness

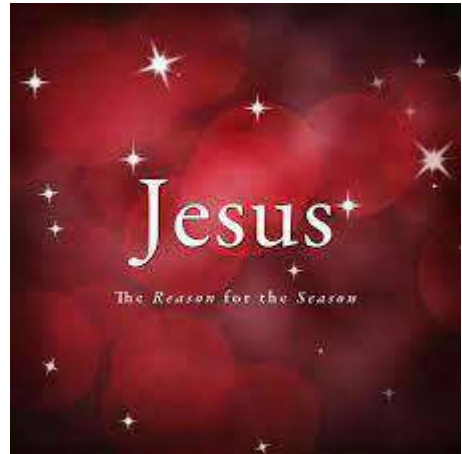
By: Daniel Korede

*Editor's note: Daniel Korede, a member of the Class of 2022, the National Honor Society, and XBSS, the student group that assists our Campus Minister in implementing our Xaverian values, shared this reflection at our Christmas Prayer Service on December 22, 2021.*

What is the true meaning of Christmas? Although most of us have been celebrating it all our lives, many of us have a hard time answering this question. Just hearing the word Christmas evokes images of decorating Christmas trees, exchanging gifts, singing catchy Christmas songs like “Jingle Bells,” enjoying a cup of steaming hot cocoa, or imagining a chubby guy in a white beard and red suit that we’ve all come to accept as the face of the holiday.

If we look past all the cliches, we can see that the true spirit of the holiday goes far deeper than that. The story of Christmas can be found in the Bible in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, detailing the events surrounding the birth of Jesus. These Gospels describe the angel Gabriel announcing the birth of Jesus to Mary, Mary conceiving and giving birth to Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit, and the wise men of the east offering gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

The holiday’s celebration is rooted in the long-standing Christian tradition that commemorates and celebrates the birth of



our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The name “Christmas” itself means the Mass of Christ, the most important mass of the year. Now we can see that Christmas is about celebrating and reflecting on the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Christmas is a reminder of how God himself came to the world in the form of a human being as a light in the world's darkness, dwelling among us so that He could die for our sins and rise from the dead, paving the way for our sins to be forgiven and for our broken relationship with Him to be restored. For me, celebrating Christmas is a time to reflect on my relationship with God, to have much needed valuable time with family, and to consider how we can follow Jesus by being a light in the darkness. May this reflection give you a new perspective on Christmas, why we celebrate it, and how we can live its intended purpose during this holiday season.

## Food, Friends, and Laughter

By: Naya Simon

In the Cooking Club, I have learned how to trust and interact with people I had never met before. Sharing something I love with others and building relationships through our shared passion has been a great experience. I have learned not only how to create various dishes or how to use utensils correctly, but also how to have a strong bond with people and laugh together. We have enjoyed chatting about our other interests while learning how to cook together. As the leader of the club, I have also had an opportunity to develop my leadership skills.

When I heard in March 2020 that our club could only meet virtually via Zoom, I was sad that I could not be with my friends and new club members to make the foods we enjoy the most. When we came back to school this year and were able to start having all our clubs and activities in person again, I made sure that everyone got back together so we could continue to make our bond stronger. As the leader, it was my responsibility to help everyone get back on their feet and make new dishes for everyone to enjoy. I have rediscovered the love I had for cooking and my passion is even greater than it was before.

The Cooking Club has even inspired me to start my own business when I get older and to go to culinary school as well. I would love to continue building relationships with others through the sharing of great tastes, friendship and laughter.

Learning how to create new dishes together and strengthen our bond with our faculty advisors, Ms. Cruz and Mrs. Sacks, and the other members of the club is what I look forward to every time we have a meeting.

## In Person Again!

(cont. from p. 1)

There are stations with hand sanitizers and wipes everywhere at school. It has become a norm to wipe down your desk and squirt some hand sanitizer every time you move to a new class. The first day was quiet overall, but as the days have passed being at school has started to feel natural again.

Covid 19, of course, has forced changes on events and gatherings as well. This year, we've had to miss out on eat-ins at school. Whenever we have large gatherings like mass or college representatives coming to school, the event is live streamed and recorded via Zoom, so that some classes can watch from their classrooms rather than be all together in the gymnasium. This year, instead of a winter ball, we were going to have a "Covid friendly" winter carnival, but then it was postponed when the school went "virtual" again for a few days just before Christmas vacation.

The social environment in the school is slowly turning back to what it once was in its former glory. Covid safety measures like plexiglass screen protectors may be an inconvenience, but students are still able to learn at a comfortable pace, enjoying the social interaction that we all so desperately missed during the months of being at home.



# Always Expect the Unexpected!

By: Daniel Korede

## Part One: Unexpected Transitions from March 2020 until September 2021

Every morning by 8 am you wake up to your phone alarm and drag yourself out of bed just to open your laptop and log into either Zoom or Meets to join your online class with 20 of your classmates doing the same thing. You switch between meetings back-to-back with a break in between. Rinse and repeat for five days and then breathe a sigh of relief when Friday comes along. Sounds all too familiar, doesn't it? It was a routine that everybody had to get accustomed to during the remote learning phase.

Nazareth gradually tried to bring students back into the building through the hybrid learning model, where only a few students came into the building at a time while the others could stay home. Now, it's been about three months since students have returned to full in-person classes after spending the previous school year mostly within the confines of their homes. However, some changes are here to stay, at least for now. Everybody is required to wear a mask, we sanitize our desks at the beginning of every class, and there are hand sanitizer stations everywhere. Plexiglass screens on the desks and tables and social distancing are also in place as safety measures. Below are some comments from current students:

Dylan Augustin, a senior and talented artist, says: "Remote learning made school a chore. The only good part was that everything was open book and you got to sleep late. Now you can actually be productive in person, especially if you're always staying at school till 5:00 like I do. I can learn and share skills that I couldn't learn and share on Zoom because of all the clubs and extracurricular activities that are meeting in person again."

Corey Campbell, a senior and member of the track team, says: "I like coming back in person way more than being online. Being back in person is more fun and engaging."

Miguel Vargas, a senior and former basketball team member who is now on the track team, says, "I would say some classes are the same online in terms of teaching, but that doesn't apply to all classes. But the level of interaction is not the same at all. School is supposed to provide an environment where you don't get distracted. At home it is far more relaxed so it's easier to lose focus, get tired, etc."

Kennedy Batista, a senior who is on track to be the valedictorian, says, "I get bored very fast when I'm doing online learning compared to being at school in person."

The transition to remote learning and back to in person learning has changed many aspects of our high school experience. But with change comes brand new opportunities. The future of Naz still seems bright, despite the challenges faced by students. Nazareth is so much more than a high school. It's a family. Not even COVID can divide our family.

## Part Two: Another Unexpected Transition

You wake up to your phone alarm early in the morning, crawl out of bed, put on your freshly ironed and pre-washed uniform, grab your best-looking business casual tie, and head out of your home, thinking it would be just another normal day at Naz. You go through your usual routine, rush to finish up some homework in class, and chat with friends during lunch. Everything is fine until you hear the announcement, "We will return to remote learning for the remainder of the year" – five more school days. What happened? A variant named Omicron ...

What will January 2022 bring? None of us can answer that question, but we know that nothing can stop us from moving forward as long as we put our trust in God and in each other. As I already wrote, "The future of Naz still seems bright, despite the challenges faced by students. Nazareth is so much more than a high school. It's a family. Not even COVID can divide our family."

# Fall Sports Corner

## VOLLEYBALL

**By: Vanessa Dorestant**

Growing up, I never really played any sports. I was more just a play with dolls and watch TV kind of girl. Coming to high school and committing to a team was intimidating at first because I had never been on one. I quickly learned that in volleyball there are six main skills: digging, setting, spiking, blocking, serving, and transitioning between positions. The ideal performer in volleyball can dig well and hit spikes accurately. To dig well, the player must keep her hands low, get into position and not swing her arms but rather relax them, allowing them to absorb the speed of the ball so that the setter can then set it properly. Realizing something was wrong with my technique, I listened to what my coach had to say and began learning the skill and improving. Players must be willing to accept criticism and learn from it because doing so will only make them better athletes. Because my teammates and I learned how to take constructive criticism well, we were able to progress as fast as we did.

There were times when the score was tied or really close. We always tried to keep our energy up and push through. It was hard to remain positive when we were down, but we always had to remind ourselves that one person's energy on the court affects everyone else. This happened before and it was not pretty - practically a domino effect. The experience of being on a volleyball team changes you. Any prior knowledge of what a team means changes after playing volleyball. You enter the court knowing all eyes are on you and you feel the adrenaline. Your heart is racing trying to make sure the ball doesn't touch the court. It may not seem like it, but volleyball is one intense sport that truly brings me and my teammates joy.

Although our season is over and we didn't make it to the finals, just be prepared for the comeback next season! The grind never stops! We'll take this time to fix our imperfections and return stronger. Our hard work and ability to work together as a team allowed us to have the season we had. BUMP! SET! SPIKE for life! 123 Naz! 456 Kingsmen!

## FOOTBALL

**By: Daron Nyarko**

Nazareth's football team isn't just a high school sports team; it's a family. We joke around every now and then, but one thing we don't joke around about is one another. This team is a brotherhood. Every game that I wear my pads and tighten my helmet for, I feel a rush of adrenaline and comfort just from knowing that all my brothers on the team are ready to go to war with me.

It's more than just playing football ... Our coaches teach us life lessons and values that we always remember to put into our day-to-day lives. If it wasn't for football, most of us would have been lost, but this team has given us a chance we didn't have before. We use the lessons we learn from every win, every loss, every practice, and every huddle to guide the younger ones on our team and set an example for them so they too can have the same chance that we did.

Looking back at the season, of course I wish a lot of things went differently than they did ... but then I realize that we came into this team as childish boys and came out as determined men. We're strong, we're smart, and we lead, but most importantly ... We fight for one another. On and off the field, when your only desire is to win, you will!

## Track Is Alive and Well at Naz!

By: Corey Campbell

Naz track and field is an excellent athletics team that focuses on running and conditioning. We regularly attend track meets ranging from weekly to every other week where we compete with other track teams across New York. So far, we've gotten through cross country season and have moved into indoor season. We just got through our first track meet.

At our indoor meets we do relays and individual races. The running distance can vary based on what race you're in, or what position you're in. For our 1600 relay, one person runs 400m, two run 200m each, and the last one runs 800m.

You can come practice with the track team for no cost. We start off with laps, then stretches, drills, and finally sprints or some other activity to close off the practice. Our exercises and drills are beneficial no matter what sport you're in so it's common to find football, basketball, or baseball players training with us. To join the official roster, you need to pay a \$100 fee for your uniform. See you on the track!



The Cheer Team welcomes Corey Campbell to the Track Team at the Winter Sports Pep Rally.

## Sisters Reaching Out

By: Nyla Cox

Sisters Reaching Out is a club led by two fantastic women, Ms. Batista and Ms. Dove. In this club we experience and talk about what it's like to be a woman in our world. Not to worry - what is said in the club stays in the club!

Sisters Reaching Out is great because we make many friends and have a chance to create change. This club talks about everything and anything, from how our day at school was to our goals in the future. It's amazing because it is not only us in this group but also women from around the world. We have many guest speakers come and talk to us about their life and careers, giving us a foundation for the future.

This club also gives us a chance to relax a bit and just have fun. We have parties in the room and go to restaurants and movie theaters whenever we can.

You don't want to miss out on a chance to be a part of something special. So come and join Sisters Reaching Out ! It'll really change your experience in high school.

Naz Track Team 2021-22





## The Excalibur Staff



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