

31st March 2020

Dear Whānau.

I apologise for what is going to be a reasonably long email/ letter, but please persevere and read it all ... a regular newsletter will follow this week, via this email option as an attachment.

Firstly, I would like to bring you warm and blessed greetings as we begin Holy Week as a Catholic community. During this time of isolation, it has been very strange to continue with Lenten and begin our Easter rituals remotely and online. Many in our Catholic and own community are not connected online, and as such have missed these important faith times as a church attending physically as a faith community. We are blessed that Bishop Pat has been able to get time on Shine TV to celebrate some Mass airing time for those who do not have access to the internet or social media.

By now you will all have received a phone call (or an email if they were not able to make contact with the phone numbers we have on our school records) from one of our teachers. Each teacher was allocated a group of families before we went into Level 4 lockdown to keep in contact with. This is why you will only be contacted by **one** teacher for your whole family. They will be your main point of contact during this time. Please note – these calls will come via a **NO CALLER ID** number, as I have requested our teachers to keep their private numbers private, which I am sure you will understand. If you have any urgent questions, you can always contact me via email principal@stjosephsotahuhu.school.nz as I mentioned in the previous whole community email last week. I am also happy to call you back if needed.

PLEASE let me know if you have a different phone number to the one we have on record, so that I can update our teachers.

Secondly, about our "LEARNING remotely or Distance Learning". We are currently on school holidays until the 15th April, even though many of you continue to undertake educational activities and remote learning routines that we sent home in the Level 3 start to our isolation time. I would like to assure you that behind the scenes we; myself, our teachers and the ministry of Education, are planning and working on what Term 2 will look like for our children. We will share as widely as we can about our programme at the end of the holidays.

To any of you who are essential workers, I would like to say a very humble and huge THANK YOU from all of us for what you do. Please take care and keep safe as you go about your mahi (work) and God bless you all. Thank you also to you that are at home, staying in your Bubble keeping our tamariki safe and teaching them how important this time is to love and look after each other – as Jesus said in Mathew's Gospel: "Love the Lord your God with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself"

On a personal note from me, I would like to assure you all that you are all constantly in our prayers and thoughts, mine and my staff's.

I am very aware that we are all on different levels of coping within our Level 4 Bubbles. I am aware that this is really challenging for some in a variety of different ways; be it financial, social, physical, spiritual, emotional or even in just getting your head around what this means as a new way of life that we have to accept and get used to. For this reason, please know I TRULY believe that a strong focus on prayer as a family (with your children even perhaps leading it), will keep us strong and able to cope with the challenges to our lives that we are facing each day. While you are physically in isolation, this is a great time to spread out in your spiritual and social connections. You have time to grow this now as a family.

I also would like to add that I am very happy to answer any emails of concerns or changes that you may be wanting to ask or talk about with someone, if you are feeling overwhelmed by anything.

God bless you all, kia kaha and keep safe.

Michele Mill

