SAINT COLUMBAN CONFIRMATION & YOUTH MINISTRY

Christmas

DECEMBER 2020 ISSUE





December 29

Sydney Nguyen

for January month Jan 23 - Jeric Aguzar Jan 25 - Jessica Vu

"He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord" -Luke 1:14-15

My memories of Christmas always pertains with spending time with my family. They always warm up my heart and bring a smile to my face as they are very precious to me. During this time, I get to play many games with my cousins and laugh about the past year. It is also the time when I can feel Jesus' love the most when I have important people around me while having fun together. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has prevented my family and many other families from getting together physically during the Christmas season. However, we could still spend time with our families virtually and spread Jesus' love at the same time despite the pandemic.

Christmas is the most anticipated time of the year as we get the opportunity to spend time with our family. This holiday is not just about giving and receiving gifts but to celebrate the coming of Jesus to bring us all to salvation. It is the time to remember the purpose of God sending his only son down to Earth. In order to do so, we need to prepare and cleanse our souls so that Jesus can come to us.

While making memories with our families and friends around the holiday times is something I would never pass up, my family and I also take this opportunity to think about those less fortunate people - how to bring happiness to them. My parents always remind my younger sister and I that with God's grace, we are so blessed with an abundance of health, love, happiness, food and shelter. We should be grateful and reflect on God's love for the world by sharing a message of hope to those more vulnerable around the holiday season. There's no greater gift of all than the gift of our "presence". Honestly, we find it very comforting to be able to spread the cheer around this time of year. Just a little commitment, a little time and effort to volunteer feeding the homeless, putting together the self-care packages for the needy can leave a momentous impression in their lives. It's our way of giving back God's love and kindness to our community. Because you know..."God is the Reason for the Season"!!

Katelin Nguyen | Volunteer

confirmation events & dates

C1

Dec 27 - NO CLASS

Jan 3 - NO CLASS Have a happy holidays!

C_2

Dec 27 - Sponsor Forms DUE and NO CLASS Dec 31 - Baptism and Holy Communion Certificate DUE Bishop Letters Rough Draft DUE

Jan 3 - NO CLASS Have a happy holidays!

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year of st. joseph

BY NORMAN SOTO & LENA NGUYEN

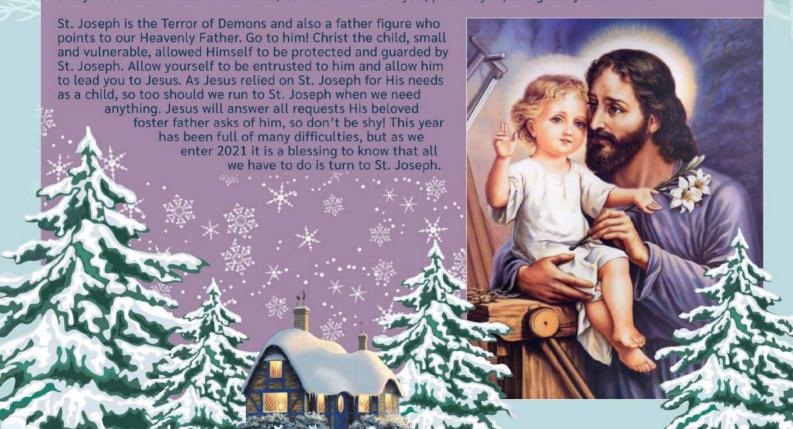
With a year full of sorrow, public discourse, and confusion, it seems that nothing could surprise us except for the Bishop of Rome. Pope Francis recently announced that this liturgical year will be dedicated to St. Joseph, the greatest of all the male saints. His humility and diligence to provide and protect Mary and Jesus truly make St. Joseph a model for our times. This year also marks the 150th anniversary of St. Joseph being proclaimed as the patron of the Universal Church, which makes this year even more special.

One common misconception about St. Joseph is that he was old when he married Our Lady. As Mother Angelica says, "Old men don't walk to Egypt!" God needed someone to walk 90 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and even further to flee to Egypt, all while caring for a young wife and a newborn. Such a task would not be given to an old man nearing his death, but to a young and strong man who could support his family through his carpentry trade. Old people are great, but Joseph was in the spring of his life when he is recounted in the Bible.

So little yet so much can be said about St. Joseph. From St. Therese of Lisieux to St. JoseMaria Escriva, many saints have turned to him in times of need with no regrets. "Ad te Joseph," or "Go to Joseph" has been the model for many Saints. Pope Francis has dedicated this year to St. Joseph with the intention to increase devotion to him. During this year we, the faithful, will have the opportunity to gain a plenary indulgence and it can be done by:

- 1. Going to Confession
- 2. Receiving Jesus in the Eucharist
- 3. Praying for the Pope's intentions
- 4. Having complete detachment from sin
- 5. Participating in a particular pious act(s)

Some of these pious acts include praying the rosary in a group, praying the Litany of Saint Joseph (in Latin), performing the spiritual or corporal works of mercy and more! Priests have been encouraged to pastorally facilitate the Sacrament of Penance and to provide Holy Communion to the sick. Earlier, it was mentioned that St. Joseph is the greatest of all male saints. After the Blessed Virgin Mary, he is the saint who loved and served Christ the greatest! In the corporal works of mercy, Christ desired that when we feed the hungry and clothe the naked, we are also serving Christ. St. Joseph took it a step further. He fed Christ, clothed him, and provided for His every need while keeping Jesus safe. Regardless of your own family, St. Joseph is a father we can turn to for every need. As the Pillar of Families, he will be there for you, protect you, and guide you to Christ.



the season of advent

HOW IS ADVENT DIFFERENT THIS YEAR?

"My experiences with advent were praying for many things and spending a lot of time with my family. I have been going to church every week for advent too. Although this Christmas we aren't giving many gifts because of quarantine, it was still fun to wrap some of the ones we could get. Christmas actually has not been very eventful because of the amount of school work we students now, but I am still grateful for the time I have with my family. To be truthful I have not done many things to wholly appreciate God's coming because of online school and I have much regret. Now that I have entered winter break, I will do my best to make it up to God. I hope God can forgive me. Yesterday I went to confession and confessed all my sins. I have been going to church every week, and when Covid was at its peak we did online mass. Due to Covid-19 I do not participate in many volunteer activities with the church anymore, but I am still praying constantly. My faith journey has been a bumpy one, due to Covid, but I still strive to do my best."

Krystal Le | Confirmation 1 Student

"My experience with Advent for the month of December is different then how it was two years ago. Last year and this year I started learning more about why we celebrate Christmas. We celebrate it because Jesus is coming into the world. I used to think it was just a holiday that everyone celebrates, just so everyone gets together with their family and they eat delicious food. Christmas is my favorite holiday and probably always will be. I love it because I get to spend Christmas Eve with my mom's side of the family and then Christmas Day with my dad's side. On Christmas Eve we stay up till that clock hits 12:00 and then we open presents. But before that my whole family including my little cousin prays. My little cousin named Josiah always says a prayer thanking God for allowing us to be together, for the amazing food, for the gifts that we are able to give each other, and finally giving us another Christmas that we can spend together. Unfortunately, this year we are unable to have Christmas because of Covid. I'm actually really sad but as long as my family is healthy everything is okay. During this Covid-19 pandemic I have been practicing my faith, and my family has been practicing as well. We have been praying the Our Father and Hail Mary. Not only in English but in Spanish too. This year I have learned a lot about God and why he does certain things. I have had more faith because I've always asked him to please take care of my family and make sure they are healthy during these times. And I believe that he has answered my prayers, because although I have had a lot of my family members get sick with Covid-19, it wasn't to the point where they had to go to the hospital. I just hope everyone stays healthy and safe."

Serrena Brito | Confirmation 1 Student

"the night before my family comes over to help my mom and I make the tamales" "My family decorates the Christmas tree and hang lights on the roof"

"My family usually prepares for Christmas by praying, going to confession, and attending mass"

"We usually set up a Christmas tree but we don't exchange presents often" "Set up a Christmas tree and gets ready for prayers"

"We prepare for Christmas by going to Church to celebrate Jesus' birthday"

"My family prepares for Christmas by usually going to confession, praying more often, decorating our house and tree, and every year we buy a new outdoor decoration"

"My family decorates our house and goes to church every weekend and Monday"

"My family prepares for Christmas by cooking up meals, attending Confession before Christmas, attending Christmas mass, and setting aside time for us to celebrate the holiday together" "make some foods and gifts"

"My family prays together more often than we usually do. Other than that, we usually decorate a tree and sometimes we get to make a stable where Jesus was born in" "We light candles and pray, as well as decorate and make a nativity scene"

"Decorate the house and go to a retreat/confession"

"My family usually decorates our home and attend usual mass services.

We also cook and celebrate with our loved ones"

"We go to mass nearly every weekday and every Saturday to listen to the preaching of the fathers"

"Setting up decorations for the holidays"

"We set up the Christmas tree and wait day by day until Christmas"

"decorating the house and praying"

"We pray for our loved ones that have past and prepare for the Resurrection of Jesus"



best or worst gift you ever received?

"The best gift I received was airpods" -Trish Tran

"The best gift I got was last year which was Airpods from my brother and the worst I got was a charger that didn't work" -Alan Vo

"The best gift I received was a high school to NBA regulations basketball from my parents" -Andrew Hoang

"The best gift I have gotten for Christmas was probably a movie we got to watch with my whole family" -Harrison Nguyen

christmas

THE TRUE MEANING BEHIND IT ALL

The word *Christmas* connotes a feeling of warmth and excitement. It is the one day of the year when family members come together to celebrate and exchange gifts. However, is that really what Christmas is all about? People tend to divert their focus and forget the real reason for celebrating this holiday. The true meaning of Christmas is the celebration of Jesus' birth. We remember the time when God sent His only son to be the atonement for all our sins. Sin is a power that has a hold over humanity. No sin will enter the kingdom of Heaven. When people sin, they turn away from God. And although humans have turned from God, He became flesh and blood because of His love for us. With Jesus' birth, we are freed from our sinful flesh. We can live knowing that we have the chance of going to Heaven because of the Lord's act of mercy. Christmas is more than Santa Claus, reindeer, Christmas trees, and presents. Christmas is about rejoicing in the day that Jesus was born. We give gifts on this day because of the gift that God gave to us. We use tinsels, stars, and angels to decorate our Christmas trees because they were all associated with Jesus' birth. This holiday is all about God coming down from Heaven to rescue us and to deliver us from death.

Personally, Christmas is about gathering with my extended family to remember the birth of the Savior, Jesus Christ, and to show gratitude as well as love. Every year, my family drives to Bakersfield to spend the holidays with my dad's side of the family. On Christmas Eve, all twenty-two of us go to Mass. This church is filled with unfamiliar faces, and still, everyone gives off such a welcoming vibe. This is because it is one of those small Vietnamese communities where everyone knows everyone. Although it is a relatively small community, the pews are filled up and the church reaches its maximum capacity during this particular Mass. I love seeing how strangers will come together on this special day to celebrate Jesus' birth, and how joyful everyone is throughout the Mass. Christmas is also about giving because God's greatest gift to mankind is Jesus. Because of this, it is a tradition to give gifts on Christmas day. Seeing my little cousins' faces light up with smiles that reach from one ear to the other gives me an indescribable sensation of joy. Another event that brings me happiness is when all of us sit together at the large dining table. Before eating, my grandpa leads us in prayer and we all thank God for the wonderful year we have had. We are grateful to have each other and thankful that God has been with every one of us.

- Lydia Nguyen

To me, I would say that Christmas is a time to celebrate our Saviour Jesus Christ. We should celebrate by rejoicing and giving thanks to the Lord's affection towards us. God gifted us Jesus who would save us from evil and sin. God is showing us His love for us through Jesus Christ. We should thank all God has done and continues to do for us. During Christmas, I celebrate with my family and friends. I appreciate being able to share and spend some time together and make new precious memories. And of course, I also love receiving and giving presents to loved ones. To prepare for Christmas, I give thanks to the Lord and also pray. I think it is important to give thanks to the Lord because He glorified us with our Savior Jesus Christ. Without Jesus, we would all die from sins. It's crucial to place our trust in the Lord and pray frequently. We should also ask for His guidance and protection from evil.

I would say the best thing about Christmas is being able to spend time with your family and rejoice. I enjoy the feeling of gathering together to share this joy despite tough times. Even though 2020 has been a difficult year, I think that it is nice to know how God will continue to guide me. He shows his love and affection through Jesus' birth. Sometimes I doubt myself and become more distant from God, but Christmas allows me to grow closer to Him and to remember His promise to us. And that's what God planned. He did not want us to be separated from Him so God sent Jesus to save us all from sins and to remember that we're children of God. It is also nice to be able to open presents and eat together. In the end, I can easily say that Christmas is by far my favorite holiday!

- Lena Nguyen

what is your wish for this Christmas season?

"For a vaccine to be created." - John L.

"To just spend as much time as I can with my family. During this pandemic, I learned to not take my family for granted. Instead, I wish to gather with my family and spend the Christmas season creating happy memories." - Trisha N.

"That everyone can be happy in quarantine." - Allena T.

"That everyone would be safe and have a great Christmas even if we are in a pandemic." - Angela D.

"For this pandemic to be over." - Victoria T.

"To have a fun party and sleepover with my cousins." - Christopher B.

"For this pandemic to have an end soon." - Lena N.

"That everyone will be able to get through this pandemic safely and hopefully without too many more passing. I also hope that those suffering through this pandemic can get better, feel better, and have a joyful year for 2021."
- Amanda C.

"For people to recover from the pandemic and for the wellbeing of the world." - Kenrich N.

"To pass my finals." - Hannah L.

"That everyone stays inside to slow the spread." - Tuongvan H.

"I hope COVID goes away soon and everyone can go back to school." - Andrew N.



how do you celebrate christmas? SHARE YOUR FAVORITE CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

Christmas is a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus. My family decorates around the house by putting up our Christmas tree and decorating in the front yard. We also gather as a family on Christmas Eve to celebrate. We prepare and make good food to have a nice dinner with the whole family. Some good Mexican food that we make are tamales, posole, enchiladas, champurrado, and ponche. Then on Christmas, we open presents. Those presents represent how Jesus did not have clothes so people brought him gifts. My mom and dad's tradition in Mexico is that they go to church and they pray and sing, this is called "posadas" in Spanish. Also on the 24th of December, we break pinatas for the kids to get candy. For the adults, they get coffee and cookies while the kids get their bag of candy and cookies. They also put their shoes in a line at night before they went to bed and baby Jesus would bring them gifts, but if they behaved badly then they would not get anything. We usually get together for Christmas with our cousins, aunts, and uncles, but this year, due to the virus, we are going to celebrate Christmas as an individual family with only my sister, two brothers, and mom and dad. This year, my family and I celebrated Advent by lighting up one candle every Sunday. There were 3 purple candles and one pink candle. This is how my family celebrates Christmas and how we have been practicing our faith during these tough times of COVID-19.

- Fatima Zaragoza

I don't have a distinct favorite memory of Christmas, but every year is memorable in its way. Each year many of my relatives come over, we play Secret Santa along with other fun activities, enjoy great food, and most importantly, enjoy the presence of family on a significant day. However, before the special Christmas dinner at my household, we pray. We pray to thank God for everything that has happened in the past year, that everyone is still able to wake up to see the next day, and for everyone being able to safely see each other. We pray for thanking the creation of the world, the birth of Jesus, and for the world at current peace. My family has some small traditions such as Secret Santa each year and maybe White Elephant now and then, but Secret Santa is played among the younger cousins while the older ones watch. The parents, however, gossip with each other and watch the cousins a little bit. They make small suggestions here and there, such as small punishments when you can't figure out who got your gift or the older cousins join us to guess the person as well. The food at the party is also delicious and unique. Every year, one part of the family would bring traditional Christmas types of foods (ham, pie, roast beef), and the other part of the family would bring fried rice, spring rolls, and xoi (sweet/savory dish made from glutinous rice). I remember one year, as a courtesy, my relatives brought food, but everyone brought dessert; we didn't have many food options for most of the dinner. I have many delightful and amusing memories, but what makes Christmas more spiritual and fascinating each time, is praying and being with family. Though many may think that praying is a hindrance, I find it necessary. Before enjoying dinner with friends and family, we should pray to God to thank God for keeping us safe throughout the day and for everything that he has done in your life. Especially now with Corona, we should thank God for the safety that people have received from God. Though we least expect it, God will protect us and be with us in all situations, even in the darkest moments of the past year, God has been there with us, helping us little by little.

Amanda Cao

Christmas is a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Before Christmas my family sets up the Christmas tree and decorations around the house and they also set up the birth of Jesus. On Christmas day my family has a great meal of tamales and we open gifts. In Mexico we open pinatas, pray and sing and we also give the kids candy after they sing and pray. Kids leave their shoes on the floor next to each other, so Jesus could bring them some gifts. This Christmas might be a bit different because of Covid. I think it's only going to be my family, not my uncles, aunts and cousins. However with all these obstacles we still know the meaning of Christmas and are just going to try to be together. This year my family has celebrated Advent by lighting candles every sunday. The candles we put up are purple and one pink. We will still have a great meal and open presents and just be together and have a great time this Christmas. This is how me and my family are practicing our faith during covid and this is how we celebrate Christmas.

Mario Zaragoza



my faith journey

HOW HAS THIS YEAR CHANGED OR CHALLENGED YOU IN YOUR FAITH?

"Given the circumstances, practicing my faith has been especially difficult this year. All the stress and work that came with the pandemic had taken my mind off of God and made me stop prioritizing my beliefs. In the first few months of quarantine, it was hard to remember to keep practicing my faith. Throughout my childhood, my parents always made sure to bring me to church and teach me about God and our religion. However, with the virus stopping us from attending mass in person, it forced us to find time in our daily lives to connect with God. At first, it was a hard transition. I would often find myself going days or even weeks without thinking about my faith. Of course I still went to mass virtually, but I was always distracted and it felt more like a chore rather than something that I enjoyed. I noticed this and started taking steps throughout my day to improve. I began starting my day by giving thanks to God for a few things that he gave me that day. Then I would spend a few minutes reading the daily bible reading and reflecting on it while relating it to my own life. Then before I went to bed, I would ask God for guidance for things in my life that I needed his help for. Even though these were small actions, I found that it helped me along my faith journey. I once again felt more connected to God the way I used to be pre-COVID. As the world opened back up again, my family and I started going to mass in person. Although mass was outside and overall different from what we were used to, I was happy that I could now go and be more involved with God and the church again. Throughout the week, I still do my routine every day to make sure I am staying connected with God. Whenever I find myself struggling with something whether it is an assignment for school or something else, I ask him to give me the strength and guide me to get it done. Even though COVID-19 had slowed my faith journey down this year, I still found a few ways to practice my faith" Theresa Duong | Confirmation 1



"As of right now, the month of November is past halfway finished. It has been my second month of attending Confirmation 1. Confirmation is the final step into becoming a member of the Church, and it's time I reflect upon my faith journey. It all started when I got baptized. I don't remember too much about it, but it was at that moment that my faith journey began. Then I was learning about God through Religious Education. Later on, it was time for my first confession. I studied how to do the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and it wasn't long before I was confessing my sins to my priest. In the same year, I also received Holy Communion for the first time. I remember that I attended the retreat in Church where teachers instructed me on what to do during a mass where I would receive the Eucharist. On the day of the Mass, I wore formal clothes and attended the celebration in the Church. After that, I completed the first level of Religious Education, and now I am in Confirmation 1. I have spent much time on my faith journey. I am excited to move forward in that journey and become an official member of the Catholic Church.



"During this time with Covid-19, times have been tough. But with God watching over me, it's really important to me to keep my faith, and I will not lose this trust I have with God anytime soon. Keeping my faith with God helps me determine what my future looks like. If God weren't by my side every day, I don't think my life would be going into the right pathway. Sometimes I ask Him when I pray at night why some things happen in the world such as Covid-19. With all the people counting on God to keep them safe, and with Covid and all the racism poing on, I ask him to make things better and go back to normal. Some people such as myself believe God has all the power in the world. Why does he do things like Covid? Thousands of people are dying of this, families going broke, and businesses going out of business. I understand things happen for a reason, but why are people getting sick and dying alone? It sometimes doesn't make sense to me and when I ask for answers from God, I feel like he isn't giving me anything. But that never stops me from sharing my faith with Him and others. Right now I think that my connection with God is falling apart and I



don't understand, but I will never stop sharing faith and talking with God. I do believe things happen for a reason but why? When I was born 14 years ago, I was diagnosed with a very rare medical condition that nobody has seen or heard about, and to this year no doctor can figure out what's wrong with me. When I get sick with certain symptoms related to my condition, I feel like He doesn't want to help me. I know God has an answer for me but I feel like He doesn't want me to figure it out yet. It's kind of frustrating and it makes me angry because I thought God was supposed to be protecting me. Some days I feel like He is gone and isn't going to help me. Nonetheless, I truly believe that if I keep talking to God and sharing faith, He will give me something in return"

Danica Jimenez | Confirmation 1

"I am new to the faith, meaning this is the first year I am taking my faith journey into my own hands. This year I am taking the initiative to learn more about God and my Catholic faith. I intend to read from the Bible, to know my prayers not just rotely but with real meaning. I plan to be of service to those around me. I intend to use my time to know Jesus through prayer and good works. I have been practicing my faith by praying before meals, teaching my siblings how to pray, praying before "ed, speaking about God to my significant other, and going to virtual church with my auntie, uncle, and cousins. When I do go to church with my aunt and uncle, I am in the presence of our Lord and I feel his love. When I pray before I eat, I thank God for the food He has given me and for the time." have with my family"

Calvin Nava-Dang | Confirmation 1

want to be featured in the next newsletter?

Don't worry, you will **always** have a chance to be in the student spotlight! Be on the lookout for the next newsletter Google forms survey.

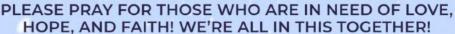
Students who write thoughtful, strong reflections will be chosen and counted for 1 hour of parish community service.

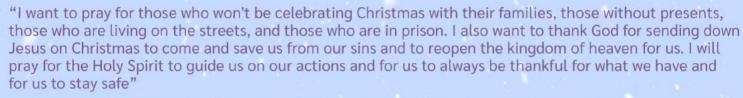
Not sure where to get the surveys? Ask your catechist for more information. Our newsletters get delivered by the end of each month. If you'd like to contribute ideas or comments to any of the pages, make sure to let your catechist know!

For more information and to view previous newsletters, visit the site: www.saintcolumbanym.org









"I want to pray to my step dad, my uncle, and my grandpa and say merry Christmas to them and tell them I miss them and wish they could be here to spend Christmas with family"

"A prayer intention that I have during this Advent/Christmas season, is that people without homes or are in a financial crisis will be able to feel God's love/presence this Christmas"

"During this season, I would like to pray for everyone and their health. The current situation now is pretty serious, and I hope everyone can stay safe and healthy. I would also like for everyone (including myself) to try and become closer to God every day. Praying and reflecting are some ways we can become closer to God"

"I'd like to pray for deforestation rates in large and bio-diverse rainforests to go down. I want the animals and plants there to have a home that they can feel safe in!"

"Pray to guide us in finally ending this pandemic, my family's health, and my grades"

"My prayer intention during this Christmas season is to my family and other people's health during this pandemic"

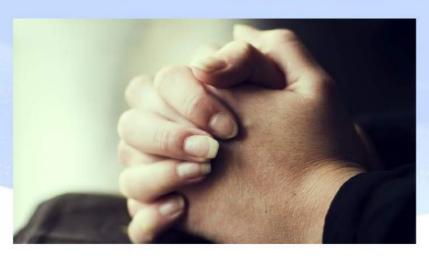
"I intend to pray more during this season. I also pray that this awful virus goes away and that life can go back to normal. I will also pray for the health of my family as well as my friends"

"I have asked God to give me the strength to help others, such as my friends as midterms are coming and stress is building up. I want to be not only a better person but also a great person to my friends, peers, teachers, etc."

"I pray to keep everyone safe during a time of hustle and bustle and rush of getting home"

"For those who celebrate Christmas alone" "I will pray for the people who have passed on"







for parents NOVEMBER RECAP

YOUTH L.I.V.E

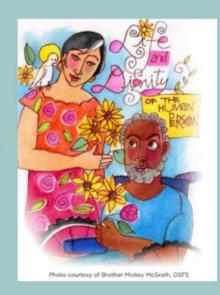
On Nov 15, a few of our Confirmation classes attended a "Youth LIVE" Seminar held on Zoom, hosted by the Diocesan Viet Bilingual Faith Formation Program. They had the opportunity to play icebreaker games with other youth from around the diocese, listen to speakers on various topics, and spent time with Jesus (virtually) in the Blessed Sacrament. One of the speaker sessions featured our own Confirmation 2 Catechist Hoan Nguyen & his daughter, Confirmation 2 student Grace Nguyen.





Catholic Social Teaching

One of the topics presented in our C1 and C2 classes last month was Catholic Social Teaching, which involves 7 different themes. The first of these is **Life and Dignity of the Human Person.** C1 Student Andrew Nguyen writes, "I try my best to live out this theme in my daily life. Even if someone does something wrong or something that irritates me, I respect them as a human and forgive them. Doing drugs or hurting others either physically or mentally is an example of not respecting the Life and Dignity of the Human Person. As the scripture says, 'Love one another, contribute to the needs of others, live peaceably with all' (Romans 12: 9-18)."



confirmation website https://saintcolumbanym.org/

previous newsletter
shorturl.at/hjvwA