

VIRTUALLY THE SAME

AMBS Transitions to On-Line Learning

Like educators across the country, the faculty of the Academy of the Most Blessed Sacrament has been getting a 'crash course' in conducting on-line classes for all of its students in response to the Covid-19 crisis.



Though the school was closed for the Easter recess during the week of April 13, AMBS had completed four weeks of virtual instruction before the break.



AMBS Principal Dr. Thomas Altonjy says that plans to transition to on-line instruction began in earnest during the second week on March.

"At that time, the Archdiocese of Newark made us aware of plans to close all of its schools starting March 16," Altonjy said. "We immediately made the decision to have an 'early dismissal' day on March 13 to enable teachers to meet with their classes and explain what was going to happen next. All of our students gathered up their books and belongings so that they would have what they needed to work successfully from home."

"During that first week of March 16, almost everything was done via e-mail," Altonjy reported. "Teachers would assign work to their classes, and students would e-mail them the completed assignments at the end of the day. It was a way for us to begin the process, but we immediately recognized that a more 'interactive' process was going to be necessary."



Very quickly, the faculty was employing Google Classroom to post worksheets, assignments, class notes and other documents, and using Zoom to set up video 'chats' with their classes.

"Everyone has been great and doing the very best that they can in this difficult situation," said Altonjy. "Our teachers have been terrific in their willingness to learn new things and figure out the best way to create a meaningful academic experience for their students."



Grade level teachers have basically established a weekly meeting schedule (generally in the morning), while special subjects like art, health, music, media and technology and Spanish meet on their regularly scheduled days.

"And we've been getting together as a faculty via Zoom as well," notes Dr. Altonjy. "We've met as an entire staff a couple of times, and occasionally, I've had a chance to meet with teachers in smaller groups."

AMBS did also its best to keep its students involved, spiritually, in the services of Holy Week.

"We came together in our prayer circles, virtually," Altonjy said. "And on Holy Thursday, our students watched Father John pray the Stations of the Cross from our school gym."

"I've had a chance to join in with some on-line classes and say hello to our students," says Altonjy. "I know that Father John has done the same. As much as I am grateful for the chance to interact with all of our students and teachers, I am very much looking forward to the day when this terrible crisis is behind us, and we can come together again, as a full community, in our own school."

