



Tuesday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Dear Class of 2020 Graduates, Parents/Guardians:

In keeping all students and staff in my daily prayers, I pray that this letter finds you healthy and safe. This letter is addressed to this year's graduates in Grade 8, Grade 12, our alternative education programs, and to parents and guardians.

Since my letter to you in April, I continue to read and hear about how you continue to adjust to teacher-led learning, your resiliency, your focus on your studies and how you are achieving the expectations in the various subjects and courses that you are completing. In following the social media channels of your schools, I have seen the many messages of hope that you have sent out to the community. Your willingness to safely help others and by staying at home, show that you are leaders in your communities by being responsible and caring citizens. I am very proud of you...we are all very proud of you and I thank you for all you are doing during these unbelievable last few months...we will get through this together.

As we approach the May Victoria Day weekend, there remain many unknowns about the rest of this school year. The questions of whether, will we return in June; if we do, what will it look like; when will it be decided; and most importantly for you, what about graduation and the celebrations that take place to mark such a significant milestone in your life journey? For many of these questions, we still do not know the answers. We do know that whatever decisions are made by the Medical Officers of Health, the Ministry of Education and our board regarding the remainder of this school year, these decisions will be with the health and safety of you, your classmates and staff as the top priority.

As the end of this school year draws ever closer, certain decisions have to be made based on many factors. While we wait for decisions on if, or how, schools will reopen for students on June 1<sup>st</sup>, Principals have had to cancel all remaining day and overnight field trips and school events scheduled for June. While all of us had hoped that annual proms and graduation ceremonies would take place, it does not look like large gatherings will be possible in June. Therefore, a decision has been made that all faith based graduation ceremonies for students in Grade 8, Grade 12 and in our Alternative Education programs will be postponed a few more months to the fall.

While all of us, you, your families and staff are disappointed, please know that together with your Principal, we are working on plans to celebrate your graduation in the fall when we hope that school and larger gatherings will resume. Our board has experiences with celebrating graduations in the fall and please be assured that they are beautiful and meaningful celebrations for students, staff and families. As individual school decisions are made regarding the date of fall graduations when it is safe to resume larger gatherings, Principals will communicate information to the graduates and families of the Class of 2020.

We have faced many uncertainties since March 13<sup>th</sup> to today. While you have adjusted admirably to distance learning, we are all saddened that we have had to cancel or postpone many Church and school activities, events, celebrations and gatherings that would have normally taken place during the months of April to June. As a fellow member of the Class of 2020, who was looking forward to visiting all of our schools before the end of the year and joining you, staff and your family in celebrating your graduation, we have to accept this current reality on our journey for everyone's health, safety and well-being.

While we are not sure at this time if there will be an extension to school closures beyond the current return date of June 1<sup>st</sup>, whenever we return, please know that our plans continue to be developed in partnership with the Ontario Medical Officer of Health, the Ministry of Education, our Board and staff throughout Niagara Catholic for your continued health, safety and learning.

As new information becomes available, we will continue to share it with you.

On behalf of Bishop Bergie, Chair Fera and the Board of Trustees, members of Senior Staff, Principals, Vice-Principals and staff, stay focused on your studies, stay healthy, safe and well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Crocco". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

John Crocco  
Director of Education