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# THE EAGLE'S QUILL

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The Literary Journal of Queen of Apostles School

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## THEME: FAITH AND VIRTUES

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# NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

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Welcome to the second issue of *The Eagle's Quill*!

Our theme is faith and virtues, which are two very important subjects in Catholic education. We were delighted with all of the terrific submissions we received and, as you'll see in the following pages, whether through poetry, stories, or one-on-one interviews with faculty, Queen of Apostles students have a lot of interesting thoughts on the role of faith and virtues in their lives. Enjoy!

Iona McCluskey and Jack Mielke, Editors in Chief  
Neal and Julia McCluskey, Parent Advisors

# GOD'S CREATION IS GREAT!

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Clara Probst | Second Grade



God made us to know, to love, and to serve him.  
And he made us so we could be happy together forever  
with him in heaven.

God created everything!  
Some things are man-made, but God created the people  
and things to make them.

God made the first man, Adam.  
God made the first woman, Eve.  
They were safe with the animals.  
Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden.

God created trees and flowers.  
He created bugs.  
God made water and volcanoes.  
Water can sometimes be very powerful.

God's creation is wise, powerful, and beautiful.  
I love God's creation, and I love God!



# INTO THE DEEP SHORT STORIES:

## CHAPTER 4, THE LEAP OF FAITH

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David De Costa | Seventh Grade

*Note: The first three chapters of this series were published last year in the first issue of the Eagle's Quill.*

So readers, now you may remember that our questers are currently on a planet, fighting aliens, and are having their own adventure. If you read the title, it says “short stories.” What is a short story? Well, a short story is a long story cut down. So, are you ready to experience a short story? This short story takes place in a LONG story. Do you remember Omega? The first planet the Aqualine Crew went to? No? Well, you don’t have to. That’s the beauty of a short story. Don’t remember the Aqualine Crew? Well, how do you learn about the characters in other stories? You read them. And what do you do with a story? You read a story. Let’s relearn these characters again and read a short story!

### **The Leap of Faith**

Steven, Juan, Jane, Olivia, and Vector were all on their way back to their ship, eagerly awaiting the good feeling of safety and security. Vector had just murdered the King of Omega, for fear that the King would get to them first. The crew felt sad and betrayed as Vector had not owned up to his mistakes. Now, Omega is known for having a very weak defense. Because of this, the border around the planet is extremely weak. Lots of meteors hit the planet, which causes lots of cracks in the planet. These cracks are bigger than the Grand Canyon! Because of this, walking on the planet is a pretty big no-no. As the crew was walking, no one was talking. Like an awkward silence with movement always happening. No one knows what to say. The only thing they can do right now is just walk. Well, not anymore. The group comes across a vast canyon, but, if you’ve ever been in an awkward conversation, you’ll know that everyone in that conversation is thinking about something to say. Steven, the leader of the crew, was thinking a little too deep. Well, you already know what happens. Steven slipped and fell into the canyon. Steven yelled as he fell all the way down and, didn’t hit the ground? Yes, that’s right, Steven never hit the ground. What happened? I don’t know yet!

All of a sudden, behind Vector, a big OOF! came behind him. As Vector turned around, Steven was lying on the floor, not scratched at all. The crew took a long sigh of relief. As Juan stared down into the abyss of the canyon, he noticed that there was NO bottom. Their ship was right on the other side of the small canyon (well, small compared to the regular canyons on the planet). Juan knew what he had to do. By doing some quick math, he calculated that jumping at the very

beginning of the canyon will get you at the back of the crew, so jumping at the very end of the canyon will get you in the middle. So, the plan was to have Juan jump at the end of the canyon with the low gravity and everything, and have Vector jump with him so he could boost off Vector, getting Juan to the end, so he could get the ship to them and fly safely to the next planet.

But, Vector wasn't trusted by anyone on the Aqualine Crew. So, you can assume Juan wasn't doing the jump. Juan had to take a leap of faith, or the crew wasn't getting home. After a few exchanged looks and trying to read minds, Vector apologized for all he had done. Vector said "I-I, I'm sorry Juan. I-I just really didn't want you guys to go. You all mean so much to me, and if something were to happen to you, I-I just couldn't accept that fact." Juan was touched by this comment and agreed to do the jump. I will spare you the details. He made the jump and brought the ship back. You knew it would happen. I mean, come on. They made their way out of Omega and onto the next planet. The End!

## MY DOG

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Mikayla Taye | Fifth Grade

I have a dog.  
Her name is Lin.

I put her in the bathtub  
to see if she can swim.

After that, I put her on a log,  
to see if she can find the other dogs.

# FIVE QUESTIONS FOR MR. DE BERNARDO

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Nat McCluskey | Fifth Grade

*Interview has been edited for clarity and length.*

## **1) When did you start playing sports? What are your favorite sports?**

I started playing sports around six years old. I started with tee-ball and then I played some soccer. Growing up, lacrosse became my main sport. I started playing that in middle school and I played it all the way through college.

My favorite sport—I guess you could divide that into favorite sport to play and favorite sport to watch. So my favorite sport to watch is baseball. I really like baseball. I'm a big Yankees fan because I have family from New York. I also really like to watch football, college and the pros. Favorite sport to play? I really like playing basketball because I think that's a lot of fun, you know, just to shoot hoops by yourself. It helps me clear my head. It's kind of nice because you only need one person, a ball, and a hoop.

## **2) What role do the virtues play in sports?**

Virtues, I think, are really important for sports. I used to be a lacrosse coach and now as a PE teacher I think they're especially important, especially at a Catholic school. You know, sportsmanship, being humble—those are two very important lessons that I think everyone needs to learn, especially you guys at your age as you're growing up and being competitive. Not just in youth sport programs but also here at school, like recess and PE class. So definitely, yes, sportsmanship, being humble, when you're winning never boasting. You want to stay grounded; that's really, really important.

## **3) How can coaches of Catholic school sports help their players grow in virtues?**

Good question. I think you could definitely tie it all back to scripture. I think that's always good to take lessons on how to modernize scripture for today's age. We talked about being humble and just look at how many times humility is mentioned in the Bible. I like to use that as a lesson, you know, for PE classes. But make sure that you are bringing that virtue side into your lessons and into your coaching and to reinforce it with Christian and Catholic teachings.



When you're looking at scripture, it was written two thousand years ago, even longer of course [for] the Old Testament, so finding ways to interpret scripture and bring it into the modern age—I think that's important. I think it's easy to do in an athletic, competitive setting when you're looking at humility. You know, when I say "sportsmanship" [I mean] making sure that you're treating others the way you want to be treated and maintaining Christian values.

**4) Many kids these days like esports and gaming. Is there a way to have virtues when playing video games?**

That's a really interesting one! I've actually been to youth conferences that have had talks about this very subject. I think it's becoming more and more important. You know, there's things like Discord and all the servers where you guys can chat and talk online. And what's kind of scary is when you give people the anonymity of a microphone or a keyboard they kind of lose themselves a little bit. So, absolutely, you still need to maintain those strong-rooted virtues even when playing something like a video game, as if you are still face to face with someone, not losing that sense of closeness because you don't want to become disconnected to where you're not acting the way that you should.

You don't want to be trash-talking someone just because you're playing a video game with them and you're not playing next to that person and saying something you really shouldn't say.

**5) Are there any athletes you really admire? Why?**

I have a couple of athletes I really like. I know I said I really like baseball and football, but one of my favorite athletes right now is a hockey player. His name is P. K. Subban and I've actually shared some of his social media posts in our older classes. He uses his platform—he's an African American hockey player, so that's the minority in the NHL—so he has kind of a unique perspective on social justice issues. And he's really, really good about using that kind of platform as a microphone to talk about the important issues of today and I really admire that about him. He's very wise and he's very good at creating a dialogue between multiple groups of people.

As far as growing up, my favorite player was a baseball player named Alfonso Soriano. He was a second baseman for the New York Yankees. I really, really liked him because he was very exciting but he always had a smile on his face and that was really cool because you could tell that he had this infectious joy about him so that he really enjoyed the game he played even though he was a professional athlete and he was paid a lot of money. He still really, really enjoyed the game and never kind of lost that childlike sense of wonder.



# MY CATHOLIC FAMILY

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Emily Kasenge | First Grade

Every week my family prays one decade of the rosary. On Saturday, my dad reads the gospels and he asks my siblings and me questions. We answer the questions. On Sunday my family goes to Mass, and every day we pray before we eat. On Easter, my family goes to the Easter Mass, then my uncle and my grandmother come. And my mom makes the best casserole ever! After that we have an Easter egg hunt and one person finds the last egg and it's empty because Jesus rose from the dead. For Christmas my family goes to the Christmas Mass. Then my uncle and grandmother come. We open presents and play with them and then we eat a big dinner. And we stay up until ten o'clock and watch a movie about Christmas.

# MY FIRST COMMUNION

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Jacob Kam | Third Grade

My first communion was very special. It happened on May 16, 2020. Because of the coronavirus, I did not receive communion with the rest of my class. Instead, I had a private Mass with Father James and my family. My daddy had his baptism and first communion at the same time. Father James wrote a sermon just for our family. He told us a story about a famous violinist and a poor street performer with a violin. The violinist did not have any money to give to the performer. Instead, he borrowed the performer's violin and he made beautiful music. Other people in the street gave lots of money to them. Baptism and first communion change us just like the violin changed from bad music to beautiful music. May 16 will always be special for our family. My mommy, my daddy, and I are all Catholic now.

## SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD

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Heldana Henos | Fourth Grade

When I was born, God made me out of love  
but I didn't know until right now.  
I have grown up now so I have learned about him,  
and I go to school where I learn more about him!  
When I pray to him, he is happy and makes me happy too!  
Sometimes if I don't do what he wants, he's not happy with what I did,  
so I try my best to make him happy.

## GOD'S STRENGTH

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Soliana Henos | Sixth Grade

I am strong  
and so are you.  
You are strong  
because God made you.

# RELIGIOUS IMAGERY IN THE LORD OF THE RINGS

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Jack Mielke | Eighth Grade

J.R.R. Tolkien was inspired by Catholic teachings because he was a devout Roman Catholic and he made sure to display that in his book series. This examination will investigate the religious imagery in the *Lord of the Rings* and *Hobbit* series. This will be split up into three, distinct sections. In the first section, I will investigate the books themselves. In the second section, I will examine the content of the books. The last section will discuss the characters in the story.

The books themselves, as in the outside of the books, are precisely named and the covers are intricately designed. In that way, J.R.R. Tolkien delicately and subtly implemented his own beliefs into the story. Firstly, the names of the books show many Catholic beliefs before one even opens the books. The first one, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, has a ring in the title, which pertains to matrimony. The second does not have a meaning in Catholic context, and the third, *The Return of the King*, is an overt title that means the resurrection of Christ and the return of Christ at the end of the world.

The content in these amazing books is littered with Catholic allegories that make the story easier to understand. The way the universe of Middle Earth was started is basically a one-to-one recreation of the fall of the angels—many angel-like beings under one all-powerful god called Eru Ilúvatar. One of the angels breaks off and many follow with him. The Ring in the story represents matrimony because one gives their future spouse a ring to signify their engagement. The Ring basically makes people lose their mind because of its immense power, which essentially makes the Ring one with the user in every thought, word, and action. The Ring can also represent concupiscence, or the inclination to sin, because all people are drawn to the strength of the Ring of Power. Both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* use the topic of the call to Christ as a grounding of adventure. The characters are forced to go on a journey only they can go down.

Lastly, the characters fall into many templates in which Tolkien portrays prominent Catholic figures. Both Gandalf and Aragorn represent Jesus figures. Gandalf is basically resurrected when he defeats the Balrog which also represents the Devil. Aragorn is an heir to the throne that is trying to return to his kingdom after winning a battle like how Jesus won the battle against sin and returned home as king. The hobbits of Middle Earth act like humans because they are weak and small compared to everything else in Middle Earth. The elves represent those in the world

who follow God devoutly. They are immortal, just like in John 3:16 where it says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” The elves had their own hosts in the form of lembas, which made one energized and satiated one’s hunger, all from very small portions.

From this examination, we have learned that J.R.R. Tolkien does share in Jesus’ threefold office by acting as a prophet by incorporating doctrines important in the Church. We all should learn from him by trying to be like God and sharing the word of God to everyone by incorporating into every part of your life. I think we all can safely say that J.R.R. Tolkien has performed his purpose in the mystical body of Christ.

## A FAITHFUL HEART

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Lauren Rostand | Seventh Grade

### **Chapter One: Anne**

It was a warm morning with a cool breeze, and the sun had just risen. Anne had recently woken up and is ready for this special day. For this day, she will give up her whole life to God. Her family said goodbye and she went to the monastery. Anne was oh so nervous, but she started to wonder what for. Would this be a great mistake, or mean a peaceful and wonderful life with God? To give up your life to God is to give up all worldly desires. Anne’s father always tells her to stay true to her faith. She finally made it to the monastery and put on her habit. As excited as she was, she was the most anxious nun in the whole world. Her mind was nervous, excited, and also quite confused. Does she really want to give up her whole life to God?

Before we go any further, let me tell you more about Anne. She was born in California to two parents in the military. Her family moved around a lot. So, Anne never had true friends because of this. She always wanted some, though. When her parents retired, they moved back to California, but Anne's father grew very ill. He needed a new heart! Anne was ever since so worried about her father. Even after the surgery, he needs to live in the hospital for now on. Even though Anne's family is going through some troubles, she needs to move on to her life. She tried job after job and never got into anything serious. Until one day she made a huge decision.

Anne wanted to be a nun in a monastery in Virginia. Anne never knew why she decided this, but still went on with it. She left her family in California and made it in Virginia. The next few weeks were her still settling in and preparing for her new life. Every day was very quiet and peaceful. She prayed, went to Mass, went to confession, preached to some of the people after Mass, cleaned the building, and gave tours.

The life of a nun was very, very quiet. Anne was possibly gaining boredom from the silence. So, she went to a priest to ask for advice. Father Robert was one of Anne's favorite priests. He always gave great homilies and the best advice. The other priests were nice, but they never inspired her as much as Father Robert. He told Anne to always stay true to her faith. Just like her father would say.

For the next several weeks, Anne kept on remembering to stay true to her faith. Until her phone rang. She picked it up to see that her parents were calling her.

*Chapter two coming soon!*

# FIVE QUESTIONS FOR FATHER RAMPINO

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Iona McCluskey | Eighth Grade

*Interview has been edited for clarity and length.*

## 1) How did you find your calling to become a priest?

There are a couple of parts to that story. There was the question of when did it seem like God was calling me to go into the seminary, and then when did I know that I was being called to be a priest—because those are two different things.



I learned how to pray from a priest I knew in high school. My parish is nearby here, Holy Spirit parish in Annandale, and one of the priests there, Father James Searby, was in his first assignment as a young priest. He's a great priest; he's still a really good friend of mine now. And when I was in high school he taught me how to go to confession and to really go to confession because I was from a Catholic family and we would go to confession every once in a while whenever Mom would put us all in the car and bring us to confession. And we'd all confess the same old stuff—not listening to our parents, being mean to our siblings—that kind of thing.

But it was Father James, in high school, who really taught me how to go to confession more deeply and how to really speak to God. How to really say, “Lord, here’s everything that’s going on in my soul. Here are all the ways in which I’m not living up to the friendship we should have. Please help me.” [I] really opened my heart to God when I would go to confession. And that meant that all of a sudden I was having conversations with the Lord, I was really talking to him from my heart.

I was really developing that friendship, and so I also was learning how to pray outside of confession, too. We lived really close to the parish, so after school I could just walk over to the parish for ten minutes, for twenty minutes. And I'd sit by the tabernacle and try to speak to the Lord from my heart and it just became clear after a long time of doing that, that the Lord was asking me to think about entering seminary. It just became clear—kind of like when you have really good friends or sometimes in your family. You don't need to say anything to know what the other person is thinking, right? Sometimes with friends it's like an inside joke and you don't even have to say anything. You just look at them and they laugh. It's kind of that way in prayer sometimes where you're not hearing a voice all the time of the Lord saying, “I want you think about seminary,” but you've been speaking together so long, you've been friends for so long, that you just know, I know what he's after, I know what he's thinking.

And then when I was in seminary, because when you go to seminary you don't know one hundred percent that you're definitely going to be a priest. You're kind of trying it out, right? So you're trying out the priesthood; the church is making sure that they know who you are and so by the end of that, you know. But it took maybe three years of seminary before I knew, yeah, this really is where I belong and after about three years in seminary I was pretty sure.

**2) Who is your favorite saint? Which virtue(s) does he or she show?**

There are a lot of great saints. I think I have to pick Saint Joseph, unless I pick Our Lady, but everyone picks Our Lady because they have to. She is the best. Aside from Our Lady, Saint Joseph. I love his peace, his peace of heart, his courage, his quiet resolve, his stability. The beautiful thing about Saint Joseph is when you look at his life, he didn't have to be peaceful and calm. He could have been a very angry man. He could have been somebody who was always fighting this, that, and the other thing. Because he's a prince, right?

So we remember that Joseph is a descendant of David, he's a descendant of King David in a male line, so according to the logic of the people of Israel, he was a prince of the house of David. He's a prince and rightful ruler of the state of Israel, at least at the time. But as we know in the scriptures, he's not the king, right? He's a poor carpenter and that word that they use for carpenter really means like a construction man, so he's working construction as a poor man. He's not the king even though he's the rightful king. Somebody who should not have the throne has it, and here he [Saint Joseph] is, doing construction work, you know, with little fanfare, making very little. He could have been a guy who was really bitter about the way the world treated him. He could have spent all his time fighting to get back the throne that belonged to him and belonged to his family. He could have been the sort of person who, even if he wasn't fighting to get it back, might have held his place in the world above other people. But he's just peaceful. He trusts that God the Father is going to take care of everything. He doesn't have to worry about whether he's gotten what's right or what's wrong. He doesn't have to worry if he's received what's just. He just has to do what's right in the moment, keep trusting in the Father and following God's will.

When Our Lady says to him that she is going to bear Jesus and the angel says, "Don't worry, this is all part of God's plan," he can just trust, he can just act and do what God tells him without fear, with great courage, with great peace, and with great quiet. And a whole lot of stability of heart, which is something that comes from courage. So I like him a lot. If God thought enough of him to give him care over God's greatest treasures, namely Jesus and Mary, then we'd do pretty well to give him our treasures, too.

### **3) Are there any books or movies you would recommend to help us understand the virtues?**

There are a lot of books on virtues. I think one of the best actually is fiction. I think *The Lord of the Rings* books are some of the best for understanding the virtues. [Note: See Jack M.'s essay on religious imagery in *The Lord of the Rings*, page 11.] They are so good, and it's almost a shame that the movies have come out because the movies are pretty good but they're not as good as the books. And now when we think of *The Lord of the Rings* it's so famous and it's so—you know, we have all these things in our minds. But the books themselves are just really, really, really wonderful.

When we think of what happens in that story, what are the sort of virtues that the people in the story have to have? They have to have perseverance. They have to have courage. They have to have hope. They have to have that virtue of friendship. Eventually they have to have all the virtues. But they constantly have to keep going even when things are tough. They have to keep relying on their friends and letting their friends rely on them, and building those friendships with other good people and trusting that that will win the day in the end. And they always have to choose, they have to choose to do good always. And by that I mean that they can't just do whatever it takes to achieve their goals. They don't get to decide, "I will do whatever it takes to win." They have to say, "I will only do what is good in order to win," right? And that's an important thing for us because sometimes we can be tempted to say, "There's a certain thing that I want to have happen out in the world and I could do a number of different things to get there. Some of them are good, some of them are bad." And we might be tempted to say the end justifies the means. But we never want to do that. We want to say, "I can only do what is right, what is good, or what is neutral. But I must never do what is evil, even if it's to get something good." Because that's part of the nature of our soul. But I think those virtues of perseverance and courage and friendship are so important, so *The Lord of the Rings* books are some of my favorites.

### **4) Which virtues do you think students need most?**

I'm going to go back to courage. Courage is one of the most important virtues we could ever have, and fortitude. Because we're in school for a long time; anybody who goes to college, that's sixteen years of school, right? In order to finish something that takes a long time takes a lot of courage. It takes that strength of heart that can keep going when times are great, can keep going when times are tough, and is not afraid of taking that next step. It takes a lot of resilience of soul. So courage is important there.

Courage is important whenever we learn because as we learn, the world around us gets bigger as we take in new ideas, we take in new ways of seeing things. It takes courage to face what we



learn, to let our vision of the world expand, to let new ideas take their place in our minds because new things are both exciting and frightening, so it takes a lot of courage to be willing to keep learning as long as we have to as students.

It takes courage to do what is right despite whatever pressure we face. That's one of the advantages of being in a Catholic school. At the very least you know that the school believes what is true and good and beautiful, so you don't have to stand up for the truth as often as you might elsewhere. But I think no matter where we are—whether we're students or working out in the world or in families—as long as we're around other people, we have to have the courage to say, “This is right, this is true, this is good, this is beautiful. And that's what I choose no matter what people around me might say.” So that's very important.

The other virtue I would say might be really important is joy. I think joy is tremendously important because that gives us the energy to keep going. If we don't have joy somewhere in our lives it can be hard to have the energy to keep taking the next step and keep going and keep moving. So joy is really, really important for us and I'd say for students especially. We've got to bring joy to our classmates. We've got to bring joy to wherever it is we learn and take our joy from all the good things God has given us and knowing how much he's loved us.

**5) What do you think is a special role that Catholic schools can play in helping students grow in virtue?**

I think that one of the most important things that you can receive from being in a Catholic school is that confidence that [says,] “I'm going to learn what is true. I can trust what I'm being taught as far as moral life and the life of faith go. I can really just focus on learning and I don't have to worry about testing the morality of what the school's given me or the perspective on faith that the school has given me. I can trust it and that gives me the freedom to learn more, just keep going further and faster down the road of knowledge.”

It also, hopefully, should give us good Christian friendships, which is so important because we help make our friends who they are and they help make us who we are. If we have friends with whom we share this vision of the world, with whom we share our faith and our relationship with God, that makes it easier for us to help them become saints. It makes it easier for them to help us become saints. And there's something about friendship. Friendship can go as deep as our common vision of the world. It can go as deep as the things that we share. We can be friends with all sorts of different people, but there's something different about a friendship when we see the world the same way, when we share even our faith. That kind of friendship can be a lot deeper, a lot more profound, and a lot more powerful, and it can last a lot longer. So that's a great benefit that you would have here—the possibility of making better friendships.

# THE NIGHT HE WAS BORN

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Sophia Kasenge | Sixth Grade

One night when the stars were above  
lay a baby boy surrounded by love.

In a simple manger was where he did sleep  
surrounded by all the cows and the sheep.

With Mary and Joseph by his side,  
their joyful faces they did not hide.

Three wise men came and gifts they did bring  
to give homage to the mighty king.

The beautiful name we all know so well,  
the angel said, "His name shall be Emmanuel."

Now we all know him as Jesus,  
the man who loved and died for us.

To him with joy we will sing,  
Christ, the redeemer! Christ our king!

# A PRAYER DURING THE PANDEMIC

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Stella Lenn | Third Grade

Dear Jesus,  
Please bless the whole school to have good faith. Jesus, our school loves you very much. We would love it if you could bless us during the coronavirus. Many people have faith in you to bless them or heal their family members. Jesus, please bless the people with coronavirus so they can recover from it.  
Love,  
Stella