

Beacons of Light



“How can I be Christ’s [light in the world](#)?” For as long as I live, I hope I remember that high school boy’s question. Visiting John Paul the Great Academy in Lafayette, Louisiana, was a little like visiting an alternate reality. Without scaring the parents of these children, I told some of them that by contrast, children in New York City were having abortions at the same age. They are doing something right at their independent Catholic school.

Visiting Louisiana for the first time, I was staying with [Mary-Rose and Ryan Verret](#) and their beautiful family. They are the founders of Witness to Love, a Catholic marriage mentoring program. It can never be emphasized enough that they are doing the most important work in the world as a mom and dad. When we turned on their road, we passed a family business, and homes of his parents, his grandmother and other family members. The ties that bind are so important. So are the connections God puts in our path by fascinating design.

Back at John Paul the Great, one of the sixth graders asked me if it’s traumatizing to have to defend the Faith in hostile territory. They live in the midst of a community that totally supports living the Catholic faith. There was a laudable hush when they learned I was in New York for the 9/11 attacks 20 years ago. I felt a little like I was tarnishing their innocence, but I was also praying that should any of these students venture out of Lafayette, they would do so with the armor of God with which their parents and community equipped them.

I worry often that parents don’t realize, because of our culture’s [skewed](#) values, that they are doing the most important work there is. Most of the things that make headlines don’t rise to the level of the work done every

morning, evening and times in between. There are also the teachers and staff and administrators of schools that open day in and day out to witness to the truth of the Trinity. Right now, there are restrictions and rules about COVID-19 that occupy time and priorities, but by the mere fact that they are in school now, there is a message being sent about what's most important: being together in fellowship, giving glory to God by nourishing young hearts and minds.

If you have anything to do with the education of the young, please be encouraged by the existence of John Paul the Great Academy. I sure am. The children there are being loved in a way that might not even be possible in New York City. But I hope we try. And I pray we are challenged because of JPG.

A woman stopped me after Mass a few days ago in Manhattan. We had been involved in a conversation a few months ago with a young woman – the same age as that young man in Lafayette – coming out of a Planned Parenthood abortion clinic. She had taken the first abortion pill in the chemical abortion process. We talked with her about her option of reversing it. We connected her with the Sisters of Life in the area, who would embrace her and help her. Her mother was pressuring her to abort, and later in the day took her phone away from her, severing the tie with the sisters. She went through with the abortion.

In New York, our new governor wants chemical abortions to be more accessible. She's encouraged pregnant women in Texas to come here for abortions. She's a graduate of The Catholic University of America's law school. She missed something the students at JPG in Lafayette learn.

But by the grace of God, with all the pressures that exist in New York, that [same girl is pregnant again and is going to embrace motherhood this time](#). I can only imagine her trauma. We don't all live on the same block to help here with all of the hard work that's to come, but as members of the Body of

Christ, we can pray for her and her counterpart in Lafayette. May God give the young strength to move forward in the [mess we are leaving them](#). And give thanks for beacons like John Paul the Great Academy and Witness to Love.

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