

1. Catholic School in Prince William County

News Channel 8

August 14, 2008

Video clip: <http://cfc.news8.net/videoondemand.cfm?id=20648>

Transcript:

Journalist: Mari Kotwicki's son Chris will be among the first to graduate from Pope John Paul the Great Catholic High School in 2011. Chris has been attending Catholic High School since fourth grade and is glad he can continue his faith-based education into high school.

Chris: You get taught by people who know the faith and the classroom size is normally smaller so you know everyone in the school and you know all the teachers and they know you too so its like a community.

Journalist: The student: teacher ratio is 12:1, with this year's enrollment at just under 200 students and the goal is to reach 1,000.

Sister Mary Jordan: The population is growing in the Diocese of Arlington and we're happy to say that we've opened 7 elementary schools in the last 10 years. And this highschool, which is the first Catholic high school for the Diocese in 20 years, is something that's really being welcomed by the people in Prince William.

Journalist: The school has other firsts: it's the only Catholic high school in the country to be named after John Paul the Great and its also the only high school in the nation with a bioethics curriculum.

Sister: So the students will have- will receive- a philosophical training, helping them to think clearly on issues like stem cell research, euthanasia, abortion and others so that they can understand the underlying principles and be prepared to think with the Church.

Journalist: Students will attend chapel and go to classes in the 188,000 square foot school and while Christ already knows some classmates and practiced with the football team...

Chris: The first day of high school I just- I don't know- I think the nerves will get to me.

Journalist: In Dumfries, Kelly Creswell (sp)...

August 2008: Coverage of the Blessing of Pope John Paul the Great

1. Ceremony blesses new high school

Potomac News and Manassas Journal Messenger

www.insidenova.com

August 17, 2008

By Kipp Hanley

Link to story and photos:

http://www.insidenova.com/isn/news/local/article/ceremony_blesses_new_high_school/19892/

Zachary Hoopes was so enamored with former pope John Paul II that he decided to take John Paul as his Confirmation name.

On Sunday, the rising freshman at Pope John Paul the Great High School shared that tidbit at the school's blessing ceremony in Dumfries. Hoopes also explained why he applied for admission at PJP — the first Arlington Diocese high school to be built in Prince William County.

The reasons were various, from the expectation of an excellent education to the lifestyle Catholic schools promote.

“Students are encouraged to live their faith and deepen their relationship with Christ at Catholic high schools,” Hoopes said to the more than 1,000 people gathered at the ceremony.

After the ceremony — in which Arlington Diocese Bishop Paul S. Loverde blessed the school — attendees milled around the facility, meeting and greeting various faculty members. Many families and future students were seeing the school for the first time and were visibly impressed with the \$55 million facility.

Brian Strickland, 15, will be playing football as a freshman at PJP. A former student of Aquinas School in Woodbridge, Brian liked everything he'd seen.

“Everything is great, I can't pick one thing over another,” said Brian as he and his mother Lori Strickland checked out the science laboratory. “It's just amazing.”

For incoming freshman **Taylor Barron**, attending school in a safe environment like PJP's was important. Taylor, 14, and her family had just moved from Charleston, S.C., and literally arrived at their home in Aquia Harbor in Stafford County just hours before the school ceremony.

“We actually picked where we live based on the fact that there was a Catholic school [nearby],” said mother Lisa Baron.

And then there was **Shaina Crowhurst**. The 15-year-old Gainesville resident and former Seton School student wanted a change of pace with more to offer than the tiny Catholic school in Manassas.

While there will only be 200 freshmen and sophomores enrolled this fall, PJP was constructed to handle 1,000 students. That's nearly three times the enrollment at Seton, which also educates seventh- and eighth-graders.

Shaina will have a longer commute now — she will be taking a bus from Holy Trinity Church in Gainesville to school every day. However, the larger variety of classes and the school's Bioethics program, which deals with such hot-button issues as stem cell research, human cloning and euthanasia, was too good to turn down, said her father, Dean Crowhurst.

2. Dumfries Catholic School Blessed

Washington Post

August 18, 2007

By Jacqueline L. Salmon

More than 1,200 people crowded into the gymnasium of John Paul the Great High School in Dumfries yesterday for the blessing of the first Catholic high school to open in Northern Virginia in two decades.

The \$60 million school opens for classes Aug. 25 and will enroll about 200 freshmen and sophomores. Enrollment is expected to eventually reach 1,000.

"Today we ask God's blessing on this center of seeking, learning and teaching what is true," Arlington Bishop Paul Loverde told the gathering before sprinkling the building and classrooms with holy water.

3. School News: www.catholicherald.com

Arlington Catholic Herald

August 19, 2008

By Gretchen R. Crowe

Link to story and 7 photos: http://www.catholicherald.com/detail.html?sub_id=7161

Fingers pointed and heads turned as new students and their parents explored the halls and rooms of [Pope John Paul the Great Catholic High School](#) following its blessing Sunday afternoon. An estimated 1,200 people from around the diocese attended the ceremony, which was moved from the auditorium to the gym to accommodate the crowds.

"What binds us here is faith," said Arlington [Bishop Paul S. Loverde](#) during his homily. "Above all, this new high school is Catholic because at its center and core is Christ in the Eucharist."

In this case, the bishop's words are the literal truth. The school's chapel — with the tabernacle blessed by Pope Benedict XVI during his April Mass at Nationals Stadium in Washington front-and-center — is situated in the heart of the building. Flanked on opposite sides by walls of glass, it's impossible to miss.

"The entire design of the school's architecture proclaims (the school's Catholic roots) without word," said the bishop, who blessed the chapel during a special Mass Saturday night.

Life was brought to the school when its first students, dressed in uniforms of the school colors green, black and white, showed off their classrooms, lockers, cafeteria and library. Nashville Dominican sisters, members of the order that will staff the school, and unmistakable in their long white habits and black veils, greeted students and parents at every turn. Teachers stood in classrooms ready to brief visitors during their self-guided tours.

School chaplain [Father Matthew Zuberbueler](#) said it was good to see the building filled with people.

"Today, at least, you can get a feel for what it's going to be like," he said.

The blessing and opening of John Paul the Great comes 13 years after its initial investigation by the late Arlington Bishop John R. Keating in 1995. Ground was broken in September 2006 and Nashville Dominican Sister Mary Jordan Hoover was named principal in May 2007.

Only 200 students will comprise the freshman and sophomore grades at John Paul the Great. The Catholic tuition rate for the first student in a family attending the school is \$8,700; the non-Catholic rate is \$12,500.

“We’ve been excited about (the new high school) for years,” said Marion **Donohoe**, a parishioner of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Lake Ridge, whose 13-year-old daughter, **Clare**, will start at John Paul the Great next year. “It’s just beautiful.”

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Timothy McNiff said it was heartwarming to see the enthusiastic response to the school from those who attended the blessing.

The school “needs for the community to see what a beautiful building it is and once they’re in the building, they’re going to see how great the people are,” he said.

Sister Mary Jordan called John Paul the Great “a 21st century Catholic school” modeled after a pope who encouraged youths to “be not afraid to follow Christ.”

The school differs from other diocesan schools because of its foundation in the Dominican tradition, she said. “We believe Catholic education changes people, it makes a difference in their life. That’s why we’re happy to be here today and to be part of this inaugural year.”

Incoming freshmen **Teresa Morris, Tory Nagel and Kelly Donovan** also are looking forward to their first year in the school, especially to meeting new people and finding their niches.

“The academic programs are supposed to be really good, and the bioethics, that’s going to be really cool,” Donovan said. All three also are looking forward to the field hockey program.

Mary Biagiotti’s daughter, Isabella, a freshman, showed her around the school following the ceremony. Biagiotti said the presence of the Dominican sisters, in particular, played a role in their family’s decision to make the daily 20-mile drive from Manassas.

“It’s just a wonderful community, very positive,” she said. “We love the whole idea of Catholic high school.”

4. Commute gets shorter for Catholic students

The Free Lance-Star

August 23, 2008

By Amy Flowers Umble

Link to story:

<http://fredericksburg.com/News/FLS/2008/082008/08232008/403812>

Glass trophy cases line the sleek hallways of the new Catholic high school in Dumfries.

The glass shelves remain empty, save for a few artifacts from the school’s namesake--rosaries and missals blessed by Pope John Paul II.

But **Colin Komp**, a Stafford County resident who will begin his freshman year at Pope John Paul the Great Catholic High School this week, hopes to help line those shelves with trophies.

He played on Holy Cross Academy’s basketball team and looks forward to competing on the new school’s basketball team.



Pope John Paul the Great Catholic High School will open its doors to nearly 200 students Monday.

When Colin started at Holy Cross two years ago, there weren't many options for Catholic students after they finished at the southern Stafford school. It ends with eighth grade.

Some chose to make the long trek to Bishop Ireton Catholic High School in Alexandria, often taking the Virginia Railway Express to classes every day. Some go to public schools or enroll in the local Catholic school, which is not run by the Arlington Catholic Diocese.

Colin and his family knew Pope John Paul the Great was expected to open in time for his freshman year, so they planned for him to attend the Dumfries school, which is 30 minutes away "in light traffic," Colin said as he toured the new school during a blessing ceremony held Sunday.

He is one of about a dozen Fredericksburg-area students who will make the commute. The school will provide a bus, which will pick up and drop off at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church in Fredericksburg.

When he walks through the doors Monday, Colin will know only three other students, out of the 200 who will attend the school.

"Three is enough," he shrugged. And he said that in addition to the new architecture of the school, the high-tech details and the new curriculum, which includes the only Catholic bioethics program in the nation, he is also looking forward to a new social structure.

"Nothing is preset," Colin said. "You're making the culture of the school."

Patricia Smith, director of counseling, will help Colin and the other students make that culture.

She also commutes from Fredericksburg, a drive she has been making for about a month. The trip is a small sacrifice to be part of the school, she said.

Smith jumped at the chance to work at Pope John Paul the Great when she learned about the new bioethics program, which will teach students about abortion, stem cell research, cloning and other issues.

"It just excited me so much, I just knew I needed to be part of this effort," Smith said.

The bioethics classes are designed to give students the background to understand the Catholic church's position on scientific advances, said Sister Mary Jordan, the school's principal.

At the ceremony Sunday, Bishop Paul S. Loverde and various priests blessed the rooms with holy water. Most guests commented on the school's stunning architecture and sleek decor.

Loverde told the students those details would be an afterthought to the most significant piece of the school: their character.

He told students that on the football fields, in the classrooms and during lunch breaks, they would heed the call of the school's namesake.

"You will build a civilization of love and be sowers of hope for a new humanity," Loverde said.

August 2008: Coverage of Opening Day of School (August 25, 2008)

1. New Catholic high opens in Prince William Co.

WTOP Radio

August 25, 2008

By Neal Augenstein

Listen to two news clips here:



POPESCHOOL 1
nau.mp3



POPESCHOOL 2
nau.mp3

News item posted on wtopnews.com:

DUMFRIES, Va. -- A new Catholic high school in Dumfries opened its doors Monday to nearly 200 freshmen and sophomores.

"We're the first high school in the country to be called [Pope John Paul the Great](#)," says [Jennifer Cole, director of admissions and marketing](#) at the school.

The new \$60 million campus for Pope John Paul the Great Catholic High School is the first Catholic High School built by the Arlington Diocese in more than 20 years. It sits on 40 acres and has been more than a decade in the making.

Each year the school will add a new grade.

"We just wanted to start with 9th and 10th graders and build up from there," Cole says. "We expect to be at full capacity at 1,000 students."

The school says its comprehensive bioethics curriculum is the first of its kind in the nation. It includes college-prep classes, as well as study in the fields of religion, English, math, science, history, world language, fine arts, business, technology and health/physical education, according to a news release.

The school, the newest in [Prince William County](#), features wireless Internet access, interactive whiteboards and projectors in each classroom.

It also has eight science labs, a collegiate-style library and a professional stage and 500-seat theater.

2. Pope John Paul the Great kicks off to a great start

Potomac News and Manassas Journal Messenger

InsideNoVa.com

August 25, 2008

By Kipp Hanley

Link to story and photo here:

http://www.insidenova.com/isn/news/local/article/pope_john_paul_the_great_kicks_off_to_a_great_start/20281/

The administration at Pope John Paul the Great Catholic High School didn't need any minor miracles to get through the first day of school.

But that doesn't mean they were expecting everything to be rosy.

"When the phone service works, we cheer," joked Sister Mary Jordan Hoover, principal. "People might take that for granted, but we don't."

Aside from a lot of half-empty bookshelves in the library and no locks yet for the students' lockers, the new school in Dumfries was open for business. Classes don't begin until later this week for the 200 students enrolled at PJP, so Monday served as more of an introduction to the building, the teachers and to each other.

It was also pretty fun, said sophomore Thomas Ranieri, who transferred from Paul VI in Fairfax to PJP this fall. "This skit that some of the teachers did, it was pretty funny," said the 15-year-old Thomas, who is playing for the school's junior varsity football team.

He, along with many of the other students in attendance Monday, were well on their way to becoming fast friends. Thomas's new football pal was 15-year-old Michael Edgerton. Thomas and Michael met for the first time Monday and were hanging out at the end of the day.

Michael, who was taking classes on-line last year from his home in Fredericksburg, was blown away by his new academic setting. He said it was amazing to finally put a face to what he's read about in the newspaper.

Freshmen Maggie Vasquez, 13, and Virginia Benitez, 14, said they had a great time on their first day of school, as well. The two girls knew each other from attending Holy Family Catholic School in Dale City.

"I like how the chapel is in the middle [of the school] and it's the first thing you see," said Virginia, who wanted to attend PJP to learn more about her Catholic faith.

Freshmen Tia Stewart and Ingrid Peifer just met Monday and both walked away impressed with their new school. Tia had been attending Carl Sandburg Middle School in Alexandria while Ingrid, a Woodbridge resident, was attending Aquinas. "Everybody was really welcoming here," Ingrid said. "It wasn't too scary."

"It was good," Tia said. "I feel like I have a chance to grow here."

Perhaps no one described Monday better than receptionist Juanita Lynn, a day filled with positive vibes not fire alarms or fights. "This was the best first of school I've ever had," said Lynn, who worked for St. Francis of Assisi in Triangle the past two and a half years.

Staff writer Kipp Hanley can be reached at 703-369-5738.

3. New Catholic school opens in Arlington, Va., is first in two decades

Catholic News Service: www.catholicnews.com

News in Brief, August 26, 2008

DUMFRIES, Va. (CNS) -- Looking over an auditorium filled with the first students of Pope John Paul the Great Catholic High School in Dumfries, **Sister Mary Jordan Hoover** of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia saw hope. "I see great hope in you, and it's filled me with a lot of hope," the principal told the 200-member student body. "You're a generation of students that wants to make a difference, and that's why you're here today." The school is the fourth Catholic high school in the Arlington Diocese and the first to open in the diocese in more than 25 years. Across the country, according to the National Catholic Educational Association, 13 Catholic high schools opened last year while 13 closed. The previous school year, four Catholic high schools opened and 10 were closed or consolidated. The new high school will include a comprehensive bioethics curriculum, the first of its kind in the country. The curriculum, written by the Nashville Dominicans, as the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia are also known, includes classes such as "Principles of Ethics," "Bioethical Issues at the Beginning of Life" and "Bioethical Issues at the End of Life."



Freshman Carlo Retta receives a hug from his mom, Angelica, as he arrives for the first day of classes at the new Pope John Paul the Great Catholic High School in Dumfries, Va., Aug. 25. More than 2.2 million students were heading back to U.S. Catholic elementary and secondary schools this term. (CNS/Paul Haring)

4. School News: www.catholicherald.com

Arlington Catholic Herald

August 26, 2008

By Gretchen R. Crowe

Link to story and photos of opening day, please click here:

http://www.catholicherald.com/local_news/detail.html?sub_id=7256

The word “new” perhaps has never been used so much.

A new building, new students, new teachers — a new Catholic high school in Prince William County. This three-letter word was, is and will be for some time to come, the most succinct descriptor of [Pope John Paul the Great Catholic High School](#) in Dumfries.

That was never more obvious than on Monday morning when John Paul the Great’s students, wearing new uniforms, sat down in their new auditorium to meet their new teachers on their first day of school.

“I’m very happy that you’re here, because this school was built for you,” Nashville Dominican [Sister Mary Jordan Hoover, principal](#), told the 200-member student body. “I see great hope in you, and it’s filled me with a lot of hope. You’re a generation of students that wants to make a difference, and that’s why you’re here today.”

Monday began the first of several days of orientation at John Paul the Great — a time when students won’t need their backpacks or books, but instead will take tours and divide into small groups to get to better know their school, one another and the philosophy behind their education.

As can be imagined, some I’m-in-a-new-school jitters affected both the faculty and the students. Tenth-grader [Amanda Ulmer](#) felt plain “nervous” just before walking through the school’s glass doors for the first time. But she was hoping to take advantage of the smaller community at the school to get to know people better, sooner.

[Dominican Sister Terese Auer](#), chair of the bioethics department, said a feeling of eagerness was pervasive among the faculty and staff.

We’re “ready to see the rubber hit the road,” she said.

Though it wasn’t the first day of work for the school’s leaders — who spent the last two weeks undergoing orientation and leading practices for fall sports — the teens’ presence brought an undeniable life to the building.

“When you see (the students’) actual faces, it begins to put a soul into your work,” Sister Terese said.

Sports practices helped students bond with one another and their coaches before lessons began. Though the school has not yet been assigned to a sports conference, its junior varsity teams — which this fall consist of volleyball, field hockey, cheerleading, football and boys’ soccer— will play the other three diocesan high schools, as well as local public schools.

[Chaplain Father Matthew Zuberbueler](#) opened the school day with a prayer and spoke brief words of thanksgiving for the presence of the students and for the school year.

“We have to rejoice today and be grateful to God that we have been called here from all different situations,” he said. “A spirit of gratitude should be ours today and really in all the days ahead.”

Relying on the teaching and the words of the school’s namesake, Sister Mary Jordan challenged the students to take advantage of the novelty of the school and to become “a new you.

“You have a chance to put your best foot forward,” she said, in order to “develop into being somebody who is better than you are today.”

Following their introductions, four teachers put on small skits — making the first day of school feel more like the first day of a retreat. With humor and humility, the teacher-actors demonstrated the high levels of respect expected from the students for not only their teachers, but for each other.

Earlier that morning, with the sun still low in the eastern sky, parents dropped their youths off in the carpool line. One mother hugged her teen goodbye; another snapped a picture from behind the steering wheel. And who can blame her? After all, it was a historic moment worth capturing for the student and for the school — and one that will be especially valued when the Catholic high school in Prince William County can no longer be called new.

(end)