



April 18, 2019

Dear Parents,

I love the city of Paris. In 1997, Amanda and I spent part of our honeymoon there, and I returned in 2010 when I lead a choir tour there, which included the privilege of conducting a service in Notre Dame. I felt sick to the pit of my stomach on Monday, at the sight of Notre-Dame de Paris (Our Lady of Paris) in flames. This building is not just one of the best examples of Gothic architecture in the world, as well as the home of irreplaceable religious art, it is also a house of God, a home and gathering place for worshippers. Nearly 30,000 people visit the Cathedral each day – yes, more than the population of Ardmore every day! That’s around 13 million visitors annually – Notre Dame is iconic.

As I saw the footage of the spire topple into the building, you could hear the gasps of despair and the repeated phrases, “It’s gone” and “It’s over”. Yet, as the night wore on, hope was rekindled as photos of the interior started to be published. Thanks to the design of master masons 800 years ago, the interior was protected from the burning wooden roof by a ceiling of stone vaulting. To the relief of church musicians around the world, the Grand Organ, the largest in France with over 8,000 pipes and including parts which date from before the French Revolution, was relatively undamaged. Stained glass windows remain unbroken or melted, and in place. The majority of the chairs and pews, although covered in water and soot also look intact. And, behind the high altar, the cross stands, gleaming in the light streaming through the stained glass windows and the substantial hole in the ceiling caused by the collapsed spire.



As we make our way through Holy Week, I cannot think of a better metaphor. Jesus enters Jerusalem greeted by the crowd with shouts of joy and celebration. On Good Friday, the disciples see their master and teacher tried, condemned, and publicly executed; His lifeless body sealed in a tomb. They were in shock, and despair, and I can imagine their murmurs of, “He’s gone” and “It’s over.”

Yet, as we know, this is not the end of the story. On Easter Day, the tomb is empty; He is alive! This is the “Jesus story” – out of darkness, there is light; out of despair, there is hope, and out of death, there is new life. I pray that this Easter, the risen Christ may be part of each of our stories. Amen.

Sincerely,

Ken Willy  
Headmaster