



*Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Knoxville: Preparing Scholars, Leaders, and Saints*

March 13, 2020

Dear diocesan school families:

Since early February, we have been monitoring the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) health pandemic daily by adhering to the guidelines and recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control, Catholic Mutual, the Health Department, and state officials. We will continue to stay informed and act accordingly, as we are committed to the health and safety of our families, parishioners, and overall community. School leaders have provided regular updates on our schools' efforts to prepare for an outbreak as the situation has evolved. We will continue this practice of responsive communication. However, with the disease now established in our state, and with spring break in the process or coming up shortly, we are intensifying our responsive action.

For our school communities, the current risk level associated with COVID-19 is low. Recognizing the evolving nature of the COVID-19 outbreak, it is important to know that our actions may change quickly. Therefore, I encourage you to be attentive to all communications from your schools.

At this time, our schools have taken the following actions. (1) Each school has been conducting thorough and deep cleaning of their facilities. (2) Teachers have reinforced proper hygiene habits and have discussed healthy interactions and safeguards to prevent the spread of contagious disease. (3) In addition, teachers are preparing for an instructional shift to at-home learning rather than in-school learning should the schools have to close for an indefinite period. The shift to "at-home learning" will likely come in a variety of forms, as different schools and different grade levels will address this in various manners. Please see the link to an article to assist you in preparing for long-term school closures. [Working Parents' Guide](#)

Since the contagion pattern is not well understood, decisions to protect the health of our community and the broader communities to which we belong, without creating unnecessary disruptions to the normal pursuit of our educational mission, is of utmost importance. This balanced approach has led us to the following decisions regarding travel, field trips, extra-curricular events, fundraisers, and non-essential meetings.

Extracurricular events, co-curricular events, school-sponsored events, field trips, and non-essential meetings are suspended through **April 13, 2020**. The Catholic Schools' Office will assess the situation further at that time. School-sponsored travel to Washington D. C. will be cancelled for the remainder of the year. Summer travel programs will be evaluated in April. These guidelines represent our best judgment, at this moment, about practical steps to reduce the risk for ourselves and for each other.

The steps we are taking to protect the health of the community may involve significant inconvenience and personal sacrifice; please accept my gratitude in advance for your goodwill and understanding. During this time, our students may experience fear and anxiety about this illness. It is important to be honest about the disease with care and concern, but also-model the calm assurance that children need from adults to feel safe and secure. I have complete confidence in our school communities' ability to pull together with intelligence, kindness, care, and concern for the common good of all.

In Christ,

*Dr. Sedonna J. Prater*

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