



*Office of the Bishop
Diocese of Saint Cloud*

214 3RD AVENUE SOUTH - BOX 1248
ST. CLOUD, MINNESOTA 56302
TELEPHONE (320) 251-2340
FAX (320) 258-7618

November 12, 2020

Dear Catholic school parents and families,

As Catholics, we care for our communities through word and action alike. I am very proud of our Catholic schools. They have been places where students, teachers and staff continue to come together to learn and grow in faith. Following our diocesan guidance for reopening, they have been able to provide safe environments that have helped stabilize and protect our communities.

I am especially grateful to you, our Catholic school parents. Your support of health and safety measures have allowed our schools to remain open for in-person learning. When changes have taken place, it has been met with understanding and flexibility. Schools cannot do it without you, and they will need you more than ever in the months ahead.

Since the start of the school year, the situation with the coronavirus has changed dramatically. We have seen infection rates in parts of our diocese grow from single to triple digits per 10,000 people in a matter of only weeks. Hospitals report being filled to capacity, and inpatient treatments and services for COVID-19 are well past the previous high levels in April and May. Even with mitigations and new regulations, projections for central Minnesota show a continued increase of cases into the start of 2021. As the spread of the virus increases, so must our resilience for protecting our communities from further harm.

I have shared with schools and parishes from the start of the pandemic that our protocols and practices are consistent with the Catholic values of compassion, protecting human life and serving the common good. We model the Gospel through our proactive measures that allow us to continue to worship, learn and gather safely and responsibly. It is critical that we all adhere to the practices of wearing masks, keeping physical distance, washing hands and sanitizing, and staying home when we are sick.

If you or your children have symptoms consistent with COVID-19, it is important that you seek testing and cooperate with public health officials in contact tracing. While you wait for results, abide by quarantine guidance. If you or your children have been identified as close contacts of an infected person, it is critical that you stay home and quarantine the recommended amount of time from public health officials. I understand that these can feel inconvenient and perhaps even unfair. However, these practices work. They have been successful in our Catholic schools to date. They are necessary, and we must ensure that we follow them.

November 12, 2020
Catholic school parents and families
Page 2

I know that this can be stressful for families, and feel quite overwhelming at times. I encourage you to reach out to one another, to pray for each another, and to find new ways to connect and share your joys and burdens. In his new encyclical "Fratelli tutti," Pope Francis calls us to work together in goodness, love, justice and solidarity to meet the challenges before us. He writes, "no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together," (Fratelli tutti, 32). To address the needs and difficulties of the coronavirus, we must work with others in our communities. We must follow our state's health and safety protocols and mandates to protect ourselves and others. In this time of trial, we are especially reminded that "we are part of one another, that we are brothers and sisters of one another," (32).

As the pandemic continues and new needs arise, I ask for your patience, trust and understanding. Your principals, staff and teachers are committed to partner with you in the education of your children. Please pray for them and do what you can to extend your support to them. Let us all work to be a stronger Church, together. May God bless you all.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Donald J. Kettler

+Donald J. Kettler
Bishop, Diocese of Saint Cloud