



DIOCESE OF TRENTON

Department of Catholic Education

April 6, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As Holy Week unfolds, I wanted to provide a general update as Catholic schools continue with the remote learning necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Inquiries Regarding Continued School Closures

Our schools continue to follow Governor Murphy's Executive Order No. 104 and affirmed in Executive Order No. 107 that directs all public, private, and parochial preschool program premises, and elementary and secondary schools to remain closed to students as long as the executive orders remain in effect. Governor Murphy indicated that "the decision to reopen will be based on careful discussion with our public health and safety experts, and with our educators and districts, and will be guided by the facts on the ground." He indicated that there would be no assessing the reopening of schools until at least April 17 at the earliest and he asked administrators to refrain from speculating or announcing school reopening dates unless directed to do so by the Governor. The decision to reopen schools lies clearly with Governor Murphy.

Faculty, Staff and Students – Rising to a New Form of Learning

Sincere thanks are extended to our school administrators, faculty, and staff for their dedication and commitment to ensure continuity of instruction in a new environment. In many cases, instructors have gone outside their comfort zone as they transmit learning in a remote manner. Beyond the learning required to utilize different instructional modes, teachers are spending countless hours in planning, delivering instruction, staying in contact with students and parents, and in reviewing student work. Administrators continue to tout their teachers' resourcefulness and ingenuity. We are blessed with their caring and support as students receive sound, balanced learning during this time.

Importance of Tuition in Changing Times

As you are aware, the discontinuation of Masses and the social distancing have significantly impacted financial support for our Catholic schools. The decline in offertory collections and fundraising has been considerable. Your responsiveness in continuing to meet tuition payments in a timely manner is important and deeply appreciated. As you likely recall from state of the school updates provided in back-to-school meetings, the cost to educate each child is not covered by tuition. The differential generally falls within a deficit range of \$1,500 - \$2,000 per student. It is the parish subsidy and outside funding that occurs through the course of the year that keeps tuition affordable. As parents and the school entered into an agreement, tuition payments are to be honored and paid in full as instruction continues to be delivered.



This is a challenging time for many - for families and businesses, churches and pastors, schools and administrators, teachers, and students. All have experienced a loss of normalcy and routine. It is essential that we all work together in a spirit of collaboration. Please keep communication flowing with your child(ren)'s teacher(s) and with the school principal, as may be helpful or necessary, in working through each day's realities. Thank you for your continued efforts to keep your child(ren) focused in a time unlike any we have ever experienced.

Catholic Services and Masses

Visit the Monitor website - <https://trentonmonitor.com/> to learn of Masses and resources for Holy Week. Also see <https://dioceseoftrenton.org/holy-week-at-home>. A list of Masses being live-streamed by Bishop O'Connell and local parishes can be found on <https://TrentonMonitor.com/coronavirus/>.

Closing Thoughts

During this time of uncertainty, let us acknowledge that the world is different. Beyond our community, our diocese, our state, our country, individuals throughout the globe are part of this time in history.

As we deal with stress, anxiety, fear and uncertainty, let us be mindful of all the things that are the same. The blossoming trees, the flowers, the birds, the warmer weather are all there for our enjoyment. They are unaffected by virus or uncertainty. They are there to be enjoyed. While there is difficulty, there is sameness in God's bounty as seen in nature. Be gentle with yourself. Be still. Be prayerful. Enjoy the gift of time with family. Take timeouts. Love and be loved. Make memories that will carry us forward as new tomorrows unfold.

Know that you and your families are in the prayers of Bishop O'Connell, our priests and all in the Department of Catholic Schools. Please continue to keep those who have died in your prayers and all who are affected by Covid-19 including individuals, families, first responders, and the medical staff.

May you know God's blessings as the solemnity of Holy Week gives way to the joys of the Resurrection and the Easter season.

Sincerely,

JoAnn Tier
Superintendent of Catholic Schools