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Diocese of Saint Cloud*

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Dear Catholic school parents and families,

Grace and peace be with you in these remaining days of summer.

I am proud of the many ways our Catholic schools brought the Gospel to life over this past school year. Despite many challenges and unknowns, students were able to gather to learn, to celebrate our faith, to grow in relationships and to serve others in our communities. I am especially grateful to you for your steadfast faith and the many sacrifices you have made.

I write you today with information about opening our Catholic schools for the 2021-2022 school year. We have so many reasons to be optimistic that students will learn and grow together in person, much as they did prior to the start of the pandemic. This will only be possible with continued diligence, trust and prayer.

The key mitigation strategies for Catholic schools will prioritize efforts to:

- Keep COVID-19 infections out of schools,
- Prevent transmission in schools, and
- Support students and families during disruptions due to COVID-19.

While the final details of school-opening guidance are still being determined, I can share with you several of the main features. Please understand that these reflect the most current information available, and it remains possible that changing conditions could require adjustments in planning. At this time, we expect that:

- Schools will provide in-person instruction, activities and programming.
- COVID-19 vaccinations are recommended, but will not be required, for eligible students and school staff.
- Face masks will be optional for students and staff in school. Face masks will be required on school transportation due to federal mandates.
- Parents will work with schools to screen students for signs and symptoms of illness, keep them home when sick, and seek testing or appropriate medical care before returning them to school.
- Schools will report all known cases of COVID-19 to the Minnesota Department of Health, which is a legal requirement.
- Schools will inform parents when their students are close contacts to known infected persons, and will utilize appropriate quarantine measures.

- Parents and school staff will collaboratively support a culture of care and understanding that can work through the frustrations and hurt experienced by so many in this pandemic.
- Local conditions and needs may call for schools to enact further policies and requirements, or changes to learning models. Schools will work with public health authorities, districts and the diocese throughout the school year as they consider such decisions.

I realize there may be ongoing questions regarding mitigation strategies, procedures and practices in our schools. I ask for your patience as school leaders prepare to welcome back students and make necessary adjustments for them.

Parents, please assure your children that, in the days to come, their teachers and principals are working hard and will be excited to see them again. Information regarding specific practices in individual Catholic schools will be shared by principals. The diocese will coordinate final details of school opening guidance within the next few weeks.

As your bishop, I want to be clear that my decision-making about our Catholic schools is grounded in the teachings and principles of our Church. With respect to recommendations from authorities in government and health, they are studied and considered, but implemented only in ways that I believe are in harmony with our faith.

I am committed to working with my staff, advisors, pastors and community leaders to see that our schools support nurturing, healthy and faith-filled environments. Our Catholic schools are called to bring forth the Kingdom of God by their example of love and care for one another, and for their communities. We need your help, parents, to see this calling come to life. Please pray for our teachers and principals and offer your support to them. Know that I continue to pray for you and for all our Catholic school communities. May God bless you all.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


+Donald J. Kettler
Bishop of Saint Cloud