



DIOCESE OF ORANGE
DEPARTMENT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
13280 CHAPMAN AVENUE, GARDEN GROVE, CA 92840

12 May 2020

Dear Catholic School Families,

Thank you for your patience and partnership as we navigate these extraordinary times.

Last week, Governor Newsom announced that California would begin to transition to the second stage of our roadmap for recovery by allowing lower-risk businesses to reopen. Schools and child care facilities are included in stage two. Looking ahead, we are making plans to re-open our Catholic school campuses to resume school in August. Though we cannot determine what the public health conditions will look like for schools in August, our goal is to return to in-class instruction. A task force of diocesan and school leaders is in the process of developing planning assumptions and recommendations for reopening campuses. Implementation of these guidelines will include a variety of health and safety precautions. It is highly likely that social-distancing requirements will necessitate the need to limit the number of students on campus at one time. If this is the case, we will create a hybrid model of education to blend classroom instruction and distance learning as an alternative to campus closures. We feel confident that we can work within these guidelines, but we must work with our principals, pastors, and school board members to determine a realistic plan for each school site. The summer will allow us time to further our plans and put the necessary measures in place.

As we work through this process, there are numerous variables to analyze at each site and we are being very thoughtful as we address new concerns as they present themselves. While our goal is to have all of our teachers and students return to our campuses in August, we continue to be mindful of those members of our school communities who are considered high-risk and will develop alternate plans for them. We also acknowledge that we should anticipate the possibility of a resumption of distance learning if the Stay-at-Home order is reinstated. We will be prepared for both scenarios.

The past eight weeks have taught us that we are at our best when we work together toward a common goal. For our Catholic schools, our common goal is to educate our children in a community of faith. I continue to be inspired by the strength and resilience of our school and parish communities as evidenced throughout this crisis. I am in awe of our teachers and principals who lead with love, even on the hardest of days. I am grateful for our partnership with our parents who will always be the primary educators of their children. Thank you for being an important part of our Catholic school community. We are grateful to be sharing this journey with you.

In a recent reflection by Pope Francis, he reminds us: "We are not alone, the Lord goes before us on our journey, and removes the stones that paralyze us." This is the hope that no one can take from us, the pope says. May we continue to be filled with the hope of the Risen Lord as we carefully plan and courageously dream for the future of our Catholic schools.

I will continue to communicate with you as we move through our decision-making process and to keep you informed as our plans are finalized.

In mission,

Erin C.O. Barisano, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools
Diocese of Orange