

Office of Catholic Schools

Diocese of San Bernardino



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Superintendent

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March 30, 2020

Dear Catholic School Families,

Blessings to you in this most extraordinary time.

What has been asked of each of us during this COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented. It is extraordinary in its social and emotional impact, to be sure, but also in its impact on our spirit and psyche. This Lent we are especially called to make great social sacrifices. Children and many adults across the country are consigned to home, working parents are strapped to find childcare, households are stocking up for an unknown future, many jobs lie in the balance, churches are closed, and when we catch the eye of a stranger at the gas station or grocery store, there is understandable concern for what we are all facing together.

A coalition of parents, teachers, pastors, school leaders and diocesan staff have been on the front lines every day working together under seemingly challenging circumstances to ensure students are cared for and educated remotely, demonstrating that these challenges can be overcome with love, patience, and compassion toward one another. Through prayer, we entrust to God our school communities, as we share Mary's conviction: "Nothing will be impossible for God" (Luke 1:37).

All 30 Catholic school communities in the Diocese of San Bernardino have responded and continue to respond heroically to these challenges. As these challenges remain, we will continue to evaluate the evidence concerning safety, health and welfare for all members of the community. As decisions are made and directives altered you will be informed along the way.

Bishop Barnes and I are especially proud of the Diocesan Catholic educators who are currently spending countless hours developing detailed, methodical, and effective distance learning plans for learning to continue for our children. These skilled teachers and administrators are equipped and skilled for this challenge. You have trusted the excellent education our children have received from our Catholic schools to this time, and we have confidence that our children will continue to thrive in the distance learning setting prepared by our schools. Please know that the Office of Catholic Schools and all of our 30 Catholic schools are ready to complete this academic year via distance education technology, if needed, along with thousands of universities and other educational institutions engaging students in these same processes.

We know firsthand that our Catholic schools are a gift to our Church and to our world, but we must also know, our response to the difficult question of tuition will challenge many families to walk away from their commitment to this education for their children. With work hours either reduced, jobs eliminated, or people furloughed, families are making many difficult financial decisions. As you hit the

reset on your household budget priorities, please remember that our Catholic schools are dependent upon tuition for maintaining general operation, teacher/staff salaries and quality academic programming, including integrated faith formation. We ask that you continue to support your Catholic school with your tuition commitment. Prayerfully consider the value of tuition in the lives of your children and the challenges they are facing now and in the future. We encourage you to reach out to your pastor and principal if the challenges of today become too much. It is our hope that the impending federal economic stimulus package will assist each of us in our ongoing commitment to choose Catholic education for our children. As Church and as a global family, we are in this together. Staying connected to your Catholic school community will offer ongoing support for all of you and give you the assurance that your child is on the right path to readiness for the next grade.

Every parent and student are deeply concerned and uncertain about what comes next. Many events are canceled or postponed, goals remain uncompleted, plays are not being performed, sporting events and competitions are not taking place, trips are canceled, projects are interrupted, and many, many other activities and events are or will be canceled or postponed. Our primary concern is the health and safety of our children and school communities. Your disappointment is real and valid. It is deeply challenging to have so much change so quickly. We understand and empathize, it is difficult. Looking to the future, please know that as we move through this current challenge, you will be hearing from us about our plans and programs for next year.

We praise our teachers and principals, who continue to keep our Catholic schools functioning. Bishop Barnes and I are tremendously grateful to each of you and proud of how you've risen to the challenges. We recognize and appreciate that, as you give your all so that we can meet the needs of the students entrusted to our schools, we promise to make every effort to address their needs holistically, but especially spiritually. We are not alone; we have entrusted our schools, our children and you to almighty God.

We are grateful and honored to be able to work with each and every one of you. We stand with our community. Stay strong, stay safe, stay in touch with each other, and stay in touch with Jesus Christ. Together, we will meet this moment. Please know, that you are in our prayers.

Peace and Blessings,

Dr. Samuel Torres

Dr. Samuel Torres
Superintendent of Catholic Schools

+ Gerald R. Barnes

Most Reverend Gerald R. Barnes
Bishop of the Diocese of San Bernardino

