



May 27, 2020

Dear Catholic school parents and families,

Peace in Christ.

We write to you today in response to questions regarding the Catholic schools of the Archdiocese and the plan for the 2020-21 school year. **Consistent with our love and care for families, we are committed to working with pastors, principals and administrators to re-open Catholic school buildings** in late August or early September, consistent with each school's published calendar. We have begun responsible and prudent planning for the safe return to Catholic school buildings at the start of the next school year with safety protocols and ongoing monitoring in place.

The challenges over the last 10 weeks have brought into greater focus the essential role of our Catholic schools in the lives of our families and in service to the communities of the Twin Cities and greater Archdiocese. The Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis serves over 29,000 PreK-12 grade students through 90 Catholic schools and across 12 counties in over 50 public school districts. Within days of the announcement of extended building closure, our Catholic schools were ready to carry on their extraordinary mission through distance learning and have continued to do so with remarkable success.

The current crisis has nevertheless highlighted that the best environment for cultivating educational excellence in Catholic schools is when our students and teachers are together in the same physical space. Students, families and teachers have experienced deeply the challenges of teaching and learning while physically apart from one another. Perhaps now more than ever, parents, students and teachers depend on Catholic schools to be prepared and ready to safely welcome them into their buildings at the start of the 2020-21 school year.

We know responsible preparation for a safe return to Catholic school buildings will require a coordinated effort among Catholic schools. As we finish up this school year and look to the next, we have the benefit of time for planning. Over the next three months, a Catholic Schools Task Force convened by the Archdiocese will

provide K-8 Catholic schools with recommendations and guidance on the safe return to school. This Catholic Schools Task Force includes leaders from the Archdiocese and Catholic schools who will be supported by experts in finance, communications, law, public health and mental health. Together, in solidarity with Catholic school leaders, we are clear-minded about the challenges of COVID-19 and confident that we possess the skill and flexibility needed to meet the unprecedented and evolving requirements for health and safety protocols and best practices. While the Catholic Schools Task Force will focus on the approach in the 79 Catholic elementary schools of the Archdiocese, we hope that this effort will benefit our Catholic high schools in their planning. We are all in this together.

Catholic schools have an educational mission anchored in Jesus Christ that differs in essential ways from other public educational options. Our Catholic schools are united with each other and with the Church, and we will continue to work together to address these challenges.

To all those who support the educational mission of the Church, we thank you. We ask for your prayers for strong Catholic schools as places of real community, united by their love of God and each other in the pursuit of excellence for every child in their care. Please pray that we can all exercise prudent courage in the face of this pandemic.

Sincerely in Christ,



Most Reverend Andrew H Cozzens
Auxiliary Bishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis
Vicar for Education



Dr Jason E Slattery
Director of Catholic Education

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