



March 24, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Before I share any updates and announcements with you, I first want to express how extremely proud I am of our Catholic school students, families, faculty and staff. As you know, our teachers and school administrations worked diligently to set up procedures and put plans into place to support students through virtual learning, and together with our students and school families, everyone seems to have adjusted well.

Undoubtedly, the coronavirus has impacted each of our lives, especially in the past week, and you and your families have certainly been in my thoughts and prayers. My hope is that you are taking care of yourselves – physically, mentally, and spiritually. It is important to remember that we have all been impacted and so we must stand united together and be there for one another. Together, we will get through this.

As you know, seemingly hour-by-hour, the COVID-19 situation in our state, our country, and our world, seems to change, and as a result we continue to consult regularly with local and state government. Just last week, Bishop James F. Checchio wrote a letter to you, expressing his solidarity with and prayer for our school families. Shortly after his letter was released, Governor Murphy closed all public and non-public schools and many other public places indefinitely. While we were originally planning a two-week closure for our schools, state officials and the governor have given no timetable for their reopening. Please know that the latest guidance given by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is to close schools for at least four weeks, and possibly up to eight weeks. Given recent developments, it has become clear that we cannot return to our normal routine as quickly as we had hoped.

As a result of the governor's executive orders, all school offices are now closed. If you would like more details about your school's closure, please reach out to your school's principal. The Diocese of Metuchen's Pastoral Center and Office of Schools is now closed, but we are continuing to regularly work with our schools and on behalf of our students, albeit remotely.

The times we are in are certainly unprecedented and can seem to be daunting. So much of what we hear and see on the news can cause anxiety – an understandable reaction to what is certainly uncharted territory for all of us. However, now more than ever, the message must be one of calmness and composure. The State, the CDC, and the World Health Organization have been providing a growing amount of information about social distancing and practices we can adopt to alter the trajectory of this pandemic. The decisions we make – as governments, businesses, communities, families, and individuals – can influence the trajectory of this epidemic.

As your child continues to do schoolwork remotely, we ask you to consider the following:

- Check-in with your child daily about their virtual school learning tasks, activities, and assessments.
- Encourage adherence and participation in the virtual school check-ins offered by your child's teachers.
- Designate a place where your child can work independently on assigned tasks.
- Request that your child inform you of deadlines and assist your student, as needed, in submitting assignments in accordance with the established deadlines set up by each teacher.
- Remind your child to contact their teacher if they have questions.
- Dedicate appropriate time for learning, as guided by your child's teachers.
- Check appropriate learning management systems (such as Google Classroom), teacher accounts and emails for information on courses, assignments, and resources, on a daily basis.
- Engage in the virtual school platform with academic honesty.
- Pray with your children daily

The Diocese of Metuchen is committed to the spiritual well-being of our families and recognizes that the ability to participate in faith-based activities is central to our mission as Catholic educators. You and your families may be home, but you're not alone. The Diocese of Metuchen is here to offer you spiritual support, digital community and resources to deepen your faith and friendship with Jesus even through these challenging times. For more information, visit: <https://diometuchen.org/onechurchtogether>

I leave you with a thought from St. Francis de Sales – “When you encounter difficulties and contradictions, do not try to break them, but bend them with gentleness and time.” Thank you for your attention, cooperation and flexibility during these rapid changes, as we continue to work to support you, our students and our faculties and staff.

Sincerely,



Dr. Robert A. Lockwood
Superintendent of Schools