

DIocese OF SAN BERNARDINO



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

July 31, 2020

Dear Catholic School Families,

Greetings to you in these days of summer. Please be assured of our prayers for you as we all continue in this difficult journey through the COVID-19 pandemic. We are approaching the time when the new school year begins, and we know that many families have questions and concerns about how the educational experience of their children will play out this year in our Catholic schools. As you likely know, both public and parochial schools in our two counties are currently prohibited by the State of California from opening for in-person instruction, due to a rising number of COVID-19 cases. We cannot minimize the threat of this unprecedented virus, which has minor effect on some but is deadly to others. We are the Body of Christ and we must be concerned for all our brothers and sisters at risk.

The decision-making process for our Catholic schools, and for the entire Diocese, in response to this pandemic must be guided first by our reverence for human life. In the same way, our Catholic schools take seriously their charge to assure the mental, physical and spiritual well-being of all those they serve. With that in mind, the gathering of our students, teachers and school staff members together on campus simply poses too great a threat to the health and safety of our school communities – including your family homes. We know that you are anxious to return to a sense of normalcy in your children's education. If we could safely provide in-person instruction on our campuses that would be our first choice. But even one life lost because of that decision would be too many.

With that in mind, we have made the decision that our Catholic schools, Preschool through Grade 12, will deliver education in an all online format, CATHOLIC Online Synchronous Learning (COSL). The diocesan leadership will reevaluate the health and safety environment of our school communities monthly in determining the reopening for campus in-person learning in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the Governor, CDPH, and the County Health Departments of Riverside and San Bernardino. We will reopen when it is safe to do so.

Know that our Catholic schools are committed to continuing and elevating the quality of online education that was established in the spring. Catholic Online Synchronous Learning is an approach that emphasizes daily, real time instruction and every effort to produce a classroom experience through technology. What will remain constant, even with this new delivery system, is the Mission of our Catholic schools – to lift students to their full potential academically, to form them in faith and to prepare them for active leadership in their community and vocation.

Let us continue to pray for one another in this challenging time. The sense of community that is present in all of our Catholic schools is a great gift from God. This comes in no small part from your decision to provide your children with a Catholic education. We thank you for your commitment and we ask for your patience and understanding as we continue to journey together in this academic year.

In Christ,

+ Gerald R. Barnes

Most Reverend Gerald R. Barnes
Bishop of San Bernardino

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