



Dear Parents –

I know you most likely have seen or heard news coverage regarding the Coronavirus or COVID-19 as it is more specifically called. I wanted to write to you today to tell you about conversations we are having with our school principals on this medical issue.

On Tuesday, Nancy Messonnier from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warned in a press conference that the Coronavirus will eventually be in America and stated: “It’s not so much a question of if this will happen anymore but rather a question of exactly when this will happen and how many people in this country will have severe illness.” She went on to say that schools should be prepared and that up to two-week disruptions of classes would be possible.

We want to stress that we have no knowledge of an imminent threat, nor do we want to cause undue concern. However, we firmly believe that the best preparation for us as a diocesan school system is information and coordination, and more than anything we want to reassure all families that we are coordinating with top experts and will be responding proactively to any requests that are made in the interest of public health.

To that end, the Catholic Schools’ Office is following the directives of the Centers for Disease Control, the County Health Department and the Texas State Department of Health Services. Specifically, we will continue to work closely and have frequent communication with the County Health Department in order to use practices and to review our protocols. Health officials are currently coordinating with private schools in DFW and we are included in those conference calls.

Although we think that closures of schools remain unlikely, we are working with all of our principals to promote e-learning and remote learning opportunities if students need to stay home due to sickness. We do this, so that disruptions to the traditional school day can be mitigated. The current plan is to provide alternative learning opportunities for up to two weeks in the event students need to be absent. We will adjust this policy if new guidance warrants in the future.

While there is still much information to learn about COVID-19, we have been asked to remind all families about basic prevention measures that everyone should follow to avoid the flu or other infectious respiratory illnesses:

- Everyone 6 months and older is encouraged to get a flu shot.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- **Stay home when you are sick.** Keeping a sick child at home prevents the spread of illness in the school community and allows the child an opportunity to rest and recover.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.

All schools will continue to follow our standard cleaning and disinfecting protocols, and we will continue to work with our local agencies should we have concerns regarding an illness outbreak in any of the schools.

We appreciate your partnership with each of our schools, and we are thankful that we get to be a part of forming your students academically and spiritually. Please know that we will continue to do everything in our power to ensure the safety and health of all of those entrusted to our care.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Vereecke".

Matt Vereecke, Superintendent of Catholic Schools