



DIOCESE OF STOCKTON

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

July 24, 2020

Dear Catholic School Community:

As promised, here is an update to last week's letter, regarding the reopening of schools. At this time, the COVID-19 rate of transmission in San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties remains high and a concern for the community. Consequently, as of today, our Catholic K-12 schools are likely to open in distance learning mode and are planning for that contingency. We are pleased to share definitively that our Catholic preschools will resume in-person operation in August. More details will be forthcoming from Preschool Directors.

Despite the current challenges, we have not abandoned hope that we may still have the option of an in-person K - 12 start. There are more than two weeks before the 2020/21 academic year begins, and as we have seen over the last five months, much can change in a matter of days. We are monitoring the situation closely and as the opening of school draws nearer, we will make a definitive decision.

We are blessed that our schools are small and agile enough that we are able to change plans relatively quickly. Each site already has reopening plans on file with their county health departments, which they are prepared to execute, as soon as a return to campus is permitted. Each of these plans contains the necessary protocols and equipment for the safety of students and staff.

Although the fluidity of this situation is difficult on everyone involved, in-person instruction remains our priority and our efforts will continue toward that goal, as long as it is deemed safe to do so.

Worth noting is that the California Catholic Bishops issued a statement to Governor Newsom on July 22nd, urging him to expedite issuing regulations that will enable local health authorities to grant waivers for primary and secondary schools, to open for in-person instruction. Please read the statement:

[California Catholic Bishops Call on Governor to Rapidly Develop Safe Procedures to Re-Open Schools.](#)

At the end of the last school year, in preparation for potential intermittent closures of campuses/classes during the 2020/21 academic year, the Catholic Schools Office solicited feedback from all of our students, parents, and teachers, on the spring distance learning experience. This feedback has been reviewed and carefully considered, when revising distance learning protocols for 2020/21. If, at any time, we must employ the distance learning model, teachers and principals within the Diocese of Stockton are committed to:

- Regularly scheduled live (synchronous) instruction
- Consistent schedules and student work guidelines
- Substantial support with the use of online tools
- Continuous online opportunities to practice the Catholic faith
- Cultivating community amongst students and families
- Maintaining academic rigor and instruction that supports it



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- Monitoring the social and emotional well being of all students
- Multiple opportunities for feedback and clear, open communication

In the next few days, Principals at each site will touch base with their families, to provide more details on the school's reopening schedule and plans.

We recognize that child care may be a concern for elementary families, during times when the campus is closed. The state provides for the operation of daycare programs, for school-aged students through the age of fourteen, under a rigorous protocol. We are working with state licensing to see how we can offer such programs to our Catholic elementary students. More details to follow on where and when services will be available.

To summarize:

- Our priority remains to return to campus with in-person instruction, as soon as possible and when it is deemed safe to do so, by state and county public health.
- K -12 schools in the Diocese of Stockton will likely open in August with distance learning; should conditions change to allow for in-person instruction, schools will transition as quickly as possible.
- Schools are committed to implementing a more structured and effective distance learning model; details forthcoming from Principals.
- Preschools will resume in-person operations in August; details forthcoming from Preschool Directors.
- We are working toward offering daycare, pending approval by state licensing officials.

We wish to gratefully acknowledge all of the work that school administrators and site task-forces have contributed to develop and keep school reopening plans responsive to the ever-changing circumstances of this crisis. We also wish to thank you, our Catholic School families, for your patience with this tedious and uncertain process and your trust in us. On behalf of all involved in our Catholic Schools, we remain committed to do our very best to meet the needs of the students we serve. Please continue to keep our schools and those impacted by COVID-19 in your prayers.

As we entrust all that we do to Jesus and His Divine Mercy, let us always remember to, *"Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer."* (Romans 12:12)

In the Peace of Christ,

Most Reverend Myron J. Cotta
Bishop of Stockton

Marian DeGroot Graham
Director for Catholic Schools