



DIOCESE OF LANSING M I C H I G A N

April 2, 2020

To our Diocese of Lansing Catholic School Communities:

Today's announcement that schools in the State of Michigan are to be closed for the rest of the school year did not come as a surprise, and yet it is still devastating in many ways. My heart breaks for all our students, but especially for our seniors. However, our top priority remains to keep our students, staff and families safe and well. So we fully support this difficult decision made by Governor Whitmer.

For the past two weeks all 36 Catholic Schools within the Diocese of Lansing have been busy employing distance learning programs to the 7,400 plus students that are enrolled. Most of our students are on Spring Break this week, however, many of our teachers and administrators are using this time to tweak their continuous learning plans in anticipation of today's school closure announcement. Thus, starting Monday, April 6, we will continue with our distance learning plan with curriculum advancement for the remainder of this school year.

As always, Catholic education is a partnership between parents and school staff. We are now embarking on a new and very different way of living out that partnership, but our mission remains unchanged: To form young people who are both scholars and saints. If we work together, we'll get through this and we'll be stronger for the experience.

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I echo what Governor Whitmer said today: “There is no video chat or homework packet that can replace the value of a highly trained, experienced teacher working with students in a classroom, but we must continue to provide equitable educational opportunities for students during this public health crisis”.

Students belong in school. That’s where formation, learning and relationships happen best. Since that is not possible for now, every effort is being made to maintain that critical connection between teachers, students and parents. Our teaching, learning and formation will continue. It will just look a lot different over the next few months. Our principals, teachers and support staff, those who know our students best, are working tirelessly to develop and improve ways to keep our kids learning and connected. These methods and innovations are inspiring: From the wealth of online and paper resources that have been assembled and shared; to the meals that have been served; to the many virtual meetings attended; to the emotional check-ins between administrators, teachers, students and parents.

As of today, we now have more work to do on our continuous learning plan. However, here are some details we can share with you presently:

- Students won’t have to make up missed instructional days.
 - Our schools will stop teaching new content the week of Memorial Day, May 25.
 - Schools will communicate exact due dates for final projects, papers and assignments and further details about the end of the school year.
- Faith, Families and Friendships will play a big role in this new era of distance learning, as we try to encourage connections and relationships.
- Our learning will focus on Critical Standards from our Diocesan Curriculum and could include weekly assignments, projects, assessments, and video check-ins.

- All students will be supported and educated. Our schools will continue to honor individual learning plans to the best of their ability in this new mode.
- Schools are developing plans so that all seniors will have the opportunity to graduate and all K-11 grade students will have the opportunity to be promoted to their next grade level.
 - We are developing plans for next August to assess each student so we can adapt next school year's learning plans.
 - The 2020-21 School Year Calendar **may change**.
- Schools will continue to provide resources to students and families, either in print or electronically.
- Some of our schools will continue to provide school meals.
- Mostly, we are going to be flexible and ready to adapt. None of us has ever done anything like this before, but we are doing our best because we want what's best for our students and families.

While many questions still remain, we want to assure families that steps will be taken to maintain important traditions, such as Baccalaureate Mass and Commencement Exercises. While the dates of these events may need to be altered our commitment to you still stands. We will do everything in our power to preserve these traditions. However, your safety and wellbeing is our top priority. For now, we must stay patient, as frustrating as that is at times. Schedules and plans will be shared as soon as possible.

I am confident that our Diocese of Lansing Catholic School Communities will not just survive these unprecedented times, but that we will thrive. My confidence is based on four important assumptions:

1. We have a loving and merciful God who wants us to be happy in this life and forever with Him in the next.
2. We have a team of incredible, hard-working, faith-filled, creative, inspiring teachers and administrators.
3. We are blessed with dedicated, loving, patient, committed parents.
4. We are blessed with students who yearn for truth, beauty and goodness and who strive to be virtuous learners and leaders each day.

Keep praying, keep playing, keep learning, keep reading, keep supporting each other. Pope Francis has called upon the lay faithful to take this moment in history as “a time to choose what matters in life and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others.”

We are in the midst of the storm at present but we must not lose our faith in Jesus Christ nor allow fear to take our focus away from our hope in his Cross and Resurrection. Together we will get through this. *Oremus Pro Invicem!*

St Joseph, Head of the Holy Family, pray for us.

Our Lady, Health of the Sick, pray for us.

Holy Mary, Seat of Wisdom, pray for us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas P. Mahoney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'y' at the end.

Superintendent of Catholic Schools
Diocese of Lansing