



**DIOCESE OF
STOCKTON**

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

August 7, 2020

Dear Catholic School Community:

Greetings to you on these last few days of summer. Please be assured of our ongoing prayers for you and yours, as we continue on this difficult journey through the COVID-19 pandemic. With the first day of school just around the corner, we would like to provide our latest update.

As you likely know by now, because of the number of COVID-19 cases at this time, both public and parochial schools in our two counties are prohibited from opening for in-person instruction.

Although we remain committed to a full return to our campus as soon as possible, we cannot minimize the threat of this unprecedented virus, which may be minor for some but deadly to others. As many parts of Christ's One Body, we must be concerned for all of our brothers and sisters at risk.

For the start of the 2020/21 academic year, our Catholic K-12 schools will open in August, in distance learning mode. We understand that principals have already reached out to share plans for this contingency, plans that 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
- Monitoring the social and emotional well being of all students
- Multiple opportunities for feedback and clear, open, communication

Many families have asked if our elementary schools will be applying for the K-6 waiver, which is available to all schools in counties on the watchlist. Yes, our elementary Catholic schools are in the process of applying for the waivers and intend to submit their applications, along with the campus reopening plans and other supporting



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documents. Currently, neither Stanislaus County nor San Joaquin County are processing waiver applications, due to the high number of COVID cases. Regardless, we are filing our applications with the counties, to expedite the process once our local statistics improve.

To support families who are in need of child care, our elementary schools continue to pursue child care licensing, for school-aged students through the age of fourteen. This licensing allows schools to provide child care throughout the school year, in the event that we experience intermittent campus closures. Schools will update you when child care services are available.

Let us continue to pray for one another in this challenging time. As we have said since March 16, our priority remains for us to be together in community. 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 that you join us as we *"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