



March 23, 2020

Dear Faithful Members of our Catholic School Communities,

The past two weeks have represented the very best of our Catholic schools. Never has so much been asked by so many and done by so few in such a short period of time. A coalition of parents, teachers, pastors, school leaders and archdiocesan staff have been on the front lines every day working together under seemingly impossible circumstances to ensure students are cared for and educated remotely. You've shown that *impossible* can be overcome with love, patience, and compassion toward one another.

Our schools represent the true nature of the ministry of the Catholic Church. Forty of our schools are feeding thousands of our most vulnerable children daily, regardless of what community they belong to. We've seen the personal sacrifice of staff and families sharing with one another, giving what they can to help a neighbor. We've seen resolve over fear; confidence over uncertainty; and, love over loss since the crisis began.

While this invisible threat continues to challenge us in every which way, God is present in our daily work. Because of the strength of our faith we will not falter, we will not rest; we will accept only the best for our students and our ministry. Our Church and our schools are stronger because of your resilience as a whole community. Know that the love, faith and gratitude for all that you have done during these trying times is abundant throughout our Archdiocese – you are doing God's work in an exceptional way. THANK YOU!

In this time of crisis, our priorities must be clear – we will: 1) Protect the health and safety of our students, staff and our families; 2) Support the integrity of student learning; and, 3) Protect our ministry from the consequences of this crisis. As we move into the second week of remote learning and the public health response intensifies, I want to share some important information with you.

Since the announcement of the suspension of in-person instruction on March 13, it's been our collective commitment to make remote instruction a success for our students. We knew March 31 was dependent on further guidance from public health officials. As we learned on March 19, the "Safer at Home" orders issued by county and state officials intensified the fight against transmission of COVID-19. However, a number of these orders were in conflict requiring further clarity by the Archdiocese.

On March 21, the Los Angeles County Office of Public Health issued revised guidance to conform with California Health and Safety Code and other city and county orders which includes "Educational Institutions":

UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE CALIFORNIA HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE SECTIONS 101040, 101085, AND 120175, effective immediately on March 21, 2020 and continuing through April 19, 2020, all public and private group events and gatherings are prohibited.

*Section 13. For purposes of this Order, Essential Businesses are defined as the following:
(j) Educational institutions (including public and private K-12 schools, colleges, and universities) for purposes of facilitating distance learning, providing meals for pick-up, or performing essential functions, provided that social distancing is practiced.*

As a result of the revised statewide “Safer at Home” order, remote learning will be extended through Sunday, April 19. Our intent is to resume in-person instruction on Monday, April 20, but much will depend on orders from public health officials at that time. We are committed to returning to on-campus instruction as soon as we can, but we must prepare for further extensions. Until then, we will maintain our remote learning programs and keep our families engaged, connected and learning together. We understand that some public school districts and private schools have identified alternative dates to reopen. Guidance and orders from public health officials have informed our decisions from the beginning of the crisis. As such, our return date is based on the most recent order from officials stated above.

We are working closely with our philanthropic partners to support our students, our school workforce and the future of our system. As we consider the significant impact this crisis will have on our communities, our goal is to build a coalition to create a safety net for our most needy students and staff. This work started as the crisis unfolded and will evolve in the coming weeks. We encourage you to speak as one community – parents, alumni, parishioners, and community stakeholders about supporting your school in any way they can. Now is the time for everyone to do their part to protect the gift of a Catholic education.

Despite the uncertainty we face, we know this crisis WILL END. When it does, we will welcome our students, staff and families back to our campuses and greet them with the warm embrace of Christ’s love. The decisions we make today will ensure this outcome is a reality at our schools.

God bless you, your family, our students and our community as we work together to end the COVID-19 crisis.

Yours in Christ,

Paul M. Escala
Superintendent of Schools

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

Psalm 23:1-4