



DIOCESE OF WORCESTER CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

49 ELM STREET
WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01609

March 4, 2020

Dear Catholic School Families,

This week Bishop McManus is issuing a letter to parishioners regarding the impact of the flu and Coronavirus on our parishes. I want to share much of that content with you today as it applies to our schools. With the threat of regional outbreaks of the COVID-19 virus, even in the United States, now is the time for prudence in planning for a variety of possibilities.

As you have heard, COVID-19 is a new and potentially more dangerous strain of the flu. While researchers continue to learn more about how it is transmitted, I want to echo the desire by health professionals not to incite panic. We already know that taking the customary precautions for avoiding the spread of the flu can help reduce the transmission of this new strain as well.

At this time, the threat from the COVID-19 virus in Massachusetts is low. We can assist in reducing the spread of the flu as well as instill confidence in you that your child is safe at school. I have asked school administrators; therefore, to take the following steps to limit the spread of the influenza virus, similar to what is being shared in our parishes:

- **Education** of all students and staff of the basics to fight transmission of the flu;
- **Reminding** students and you, the parents and guardians, that when sick, your child should stay home until he/she has not had a fever for at least 24 hours;
- **Regular cleaning** of our schools and classrooms and frequent, thorough cleaning of all restroom and kitchen facilities to reduce spreading of germs, while developing a schedule with staff and volunteers to assist with this task;
- **Monitoring activities** to reduce or suspend field trips which may expose students to undue risk;
- **Stay informed** of latest updates from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH)

As more information about COVID-19 is made available by health officials, the Catholic Schools Office is carefully considering what further actions might prove to be helpful or necessary, including whether classes may need to be suspended should the threat of contagion become critical or whether to implement a virtual schooling plan. Should you have specific questions about your child's school, please direct them to the principal. We are staying in touch with local and statewide medical professionals to provide further direction and advice to school personnel and to you, our families.

Finally, as our Bishop pointed out, we are communities of faith as well as education. As he wrote, "We should respond with prayer and trust in Divine Providence, for while there are always challenges and difficulties in life, God also gives us the grace to sustain us in every trial. No strain of influenza can separate us from the love of Christ, whose command to us, "Be not afraid," should resound in our hearts in these trying times. (Cf. Matthew 10:30-31)."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Perda". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" being more prominent than the last name "Perda".

David Perda, PhD.
Superintendent of Schools