



March 12, 2020

Dear Parents and Friends of Catholic Education,

The following is an official communication from the Catholic Schools Office of the Diocese of Joliet.

A top priority is the health and safety of our students, staff and all who enter our buildings. We are actively monitoring the news about the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and official guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), and local public health departments. At this time, according to these entities, the health risk to the general public from Coronavirus in Illinois remains low.

We have asked our principals to stay in close communication with the Catholic Schools Office and diocesan officials regarding any health issues, including any absences due to the Coronavirus. We will continue to monitor the situation and make recommendations as the situation evolves.

The IDPH recommends schools hold classes and events as usual and follow routine cleaning and disinfecting procedures. Students and staff with a family member who might have had contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case will be allowed to attend work and school, as long as they are not sick. At this time, we are not aware of any confirmed COVID-19 cases.

IDPH recommendations for the best way to protect against Coronavirus are identical to the general infection prevention measures that are taught to the students in our schools day-by-day, year-after-year, including:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then dispose of the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Rest assured that no matter the circumstances, we exercise care with cleanliness in all our facilities and encourage proper hygiene habits by all.

We ask that you join us in protecting our community by following the guidance of public health authorities and your medical provider. It is critically important that our community share only trusted sources of information.

Families who travel in the coming month, including over Spring Break, will be subject to the current CDC guidelines and any new guidelines that may be implemented regarding countries that have widespread or sustained Coronavirus transmission. COVID-19 information for travel is updated regularly on the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>. The guidance specifically states that staff or students who have traveled to a location with widespread community transmission of COVID-19 should stay home for 14 days after their return date.

IDPH can answer your questions about Coronavirus on their hotline at (800) 889-3931, via email at [DPH.SICK@ILLINOIS.GOV](mailto:DPH.SICK@ILLINOIS.GOV) or online at [www.dph.illinois.gov](http://www.dph.illinois.gov).

Please join us in praying for all those affected by this epidemic. May Mary our Mother defend and protect us, her faithful children. Thank you for your help in keeping our school communities healthy.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. John Belmonte, S.J., Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Catholic Schools