



DIOCESE OF VENICE IN FLORIDA

Department of Education

Dear Parents and Guardians of Catholic School Students in the Diocese of Venice:

In the midst of these challenging times, we wish to welcome back our students for an exciting school year. The Catholic schools of the Diocese of Venice have distinguished themselves for excellence. While necessary due to the public health crisis, the at-home learning program instituted in March was widely praised by school parents. Our parishes have reopened and are operating safely. It is time now to do the same for our Catholic schools. Bishop Dewane has decided to reopen our schools for in-person instruction on August 17th, one week later than our previous date. Based on our emphasis on safety, the decision to delay opening schools will give our principals and teachers needed time to prepare for a safe start to the school year.

For the trust you place in the Diocese of Venice by enrolling your child in a Catholic school, know that we are humbled and grateful. Your child and his or her well-being is of great importance to us. We know of their desire to be in their social milieu and our survey confirms your wish to see them back at school. Reopening our schools was an evolving process that has required careful planning. With the input of teachers, counselors, and principals the Department of Education has completed the school reopening plan. The plan includes the guidance and recommendations from the Florida Department of Education, Florida Department of Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It attempts to augment and clarify how and when these guidelines relate to our Catholic schools. Rigorous cleaning and sanitizing protocols, requirements for face coverings and social distancing, resources for school leaders and a dedication to the best Catholic education possible are found in our reopening plan. In addition to in-person learning, we will offer online alternatives. By the close of business on Monday next week, a "Summary Guide for Students, Parents, and Their Families" will be posted to our website.

Bishop Dewane said this summer, "We are all in this together." As the new Superintendent of Catholic Education in the Diocese, I have found his words to be true in so many ways. The dedication of our school parents who have written and called to support our efforts has been so impressive. My gratitude and admiration for our diocesan leadership, my own staff, our principals and teachers has grown by the day witnessing the hours they have spent producing this comprehensive reopening plan.

Over the past four months, we have learned in a deeper way, the value and importance of our Catholic schools. Our Catholic Faith teaches us that it is Christ who is the reason for our schools. As we open this Fall, recall that we teach Christ Himself. It is Christ who teaches us, rescues us, saves us, redeems us, heals us, unites us, forgives us, and loves us. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. In preparing to open our schools, let us remain focused on Christ who is the reason for our schools, the reason we teach, and the reason why we will gather, prudently and safely in the Fall.

Beginning this school year, let us place all our fears, concerns and efforts into the hands of the Blessed Mother. May she protect and guide as we support one another in this most important mission of Catholic education in the Diocese of Venice in Florida!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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