



Department of Catholic Education

Archdiocese of Mobile

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May 21, 2020

Dear School Communities,

Hello to all of our principals, faculties, students and parents. Who could have imagined back when school began last fall, that we would have ever ended the year in this way. As the 2019-20 school year closes, I must say that I am so very proud of all of your efforts. We have fought the good battle and will be finishing weary but triumphant.

Even though the doors to our buildings were closed, our school and faith communities remained vibrant and thriving. Student-led Rosaries, Zoom prayer sessions, and live-streamed Masses are just a few of the examples that graced social media over the past two months. I have heard of so many creative ways our teachers reached out to their students – Zoom meetings, driving by to drop off goodies, video messages, live-streamed art activities and more. I see that our schools are planning new, creative ways to celebrate students' graduations, awards and accomplishments. I have heard from parents who successfully managed their careers, households and home style classrooms. I am so amazed at everyone's response to this historical time!

Principals and their faculties are already planning and will continue to plan over the summer for our 2020-21 opening. Each school has been charged with creating a task force to include a wide range of individuals as members of this group – medical experts, business leaders, parents, teachers and maintenance personnel. The focus of their planning will be medical safety and academic excellence. CDC, state, and local guidelines will be monitored throughout this planning process. Please watch for the progress updates from each of your schools. All this and more will be done in order to prepare for the world's new normal.

I have heard from many parents that finances are a concern. Finances are a concern for all of us. You may not be aware of this; however, tuition does not cover the complete cost to educate a student. The National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) published a report in which it noted the average per pupil cost of a parish Elementary school student was almost \$1,100 more than the amount of tuition charged; at the Secondary level, the average per pupil cost was over \$4,000 more than the amount of tuition. Our work is truly mission driven – the salaries and benefits our teachers receive are less than their public school counterparts. Each school is financially independent, creates their own budget, and does not receive any financial assistance from the Archdiocese. All schools depend on parish subsidies and fundraisers as a necessary part of their budgets each year. Churches' tithing and collections are down considerably through this challenging time and many fundraisers were not able to be held. Therefore, schools are struggling to fill the short falls that subsidies and fundraisers fill in their budgets. This being said, please know that you have been heard. If you feel yourself in financial need, please contact your principal as they are ready to listen and help parents with need.

Office of Catholics Schools
Archdiocese of Mobile

I would like to take this time to congratulate all of our graduates on their hard work and dedication, especially during this unprecedented time. Although we will not be able to celebrate a total “traditional” graduation with you, it is my hope that you bring the determination and perseverance gained during this pandemic with you into the next phase of your journey. Please know that all of us in the Archdiocese of Mobile are proud of you and are praying for you. We want all of our current, non-graduating students to return to us in the fall assured that we have taken all necessary precautions to continue to be faith-based schools that provide quality Catholic education in a safe environment.

To our families, I thank you for your partnership and entrusting your child’s education and formation to us. Please know that you are all in my prayers as we identify our new normal and continue to take the necessary safety precautions. I hope you all enjoy a blessed summer and stay well.

Sincerely in the Lord,

Gwendolyn P. Byrd
Executive Director for Catholic Education/Superintendent