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D. Greg Sturgill, Principal
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Rev. Ronald J. Hopmeir, Pastor

August 6, 2020

Dear Parents,

Much has taken place since the reveal of the plan. For some, the options we offered were much appreciated; for others, it had more of a lukewarm reception. We went into the discernment knowing that a plan to please all would be difficult.

We received some great questions during the week. We tried to answer some with generic answers. I know we owe some families some more detailed answers. I will attempt this. I have to admit that I haven't had adequate time to do this properly.

I do want to share some thoughts that are straight from the heart.

First, in my humble and professional opinion (and experience), nothing replaces the quality of in-person learning in the classroom with a dedicated teacher present. It's hard to replace a caring teacher for instantaneous feedback and the plethora of teachable moments that happen during the day. Our teachers are phenomenal at educating your children and bringing them into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. Modeling Gospel values is a key component of what we do all day long.

Many questions have arisen about what our online component looks like. This is still being formatted. I reiterate, this program cannot be better than the in-person component. It will be better than last spring because of the intentionality in designing it. We are giving teachers more tools, they are collaborating with each other, we are exploring distance learning professional development, tweaking/retweaking what works and what needs to be improved.

Very simply, we do not have the staff to teach an online component only. I will not promise a product that we cannot deliver. From the beginning, we have been committed to providing families with online accommodations. We will offer live-streamed segments of educators teaching key components of a daily lesson. We will provide parents with lesson plans of key concepts for the day/week. Sometimes there may be a mix of prerecorded lessons along with live-streamed lessons. Expecting a child to be in front of a computer screen 7 to 8 hours a day is not realistic. Also, keeping things real, our teachers cannot juggle two full-time jobs – full-time day and full-time distance education. We are still looking for

times that teachers could be available for our online learners. Regularly schedule connecting with students is important. We don't know what that looks like yet, but we are brainstorming.

Our online accommodations might not be a polished product on Aug. 24. We expect our online accommodations to be a better product each week/month/quarter. That has always been an expectation of myself and my teachers, even when things weren't as complicated as they are today – to get better at our craft all the time, learn from our mistakes, make the good great, and minimize our weak links. For example, I'm planning a **soft start on Monday, Aug. 24**, by making our first day a half-day. The teachers and I will have a debrief after dismissal. I already anticipate planning how we will make the morning dropoff more efficient on Tuesday, Aug. 25. We are starting a week later than some of our neighboring Catholic Schools, and believe me, we will learn from their first full week of school.

Many, many questions have been asked about what happens if someone (adult or child) tests positive for COVID-19? We will have the direction and assistance of the City Department of Health and BJC Nurse Partnership to guide us. This will not automatically prompt us to close the entire school. More guidelines are being provided to us by the Archdiocese OCEF and School Partnership nurses, which we will share with you once they are finalized. Things are changing for us every day and sometimes by the hour. I just found out in the 5:00 hour that ITBS testing has been postponed until Spring 2021. High School Nights have been canceled for the fall as well. Being flexible is important for us all right now.

What does regular cleaning and sanitizing look like is a popular question, and I'm still looking for competent answers. We have posed that question to our janitorial service; the owner of Patriot has been contacted. I'd also like reassurances from Mr. Bob Wiley, our maintenance manager, before sending a response. (Please keep Mr. Wiley and his family in your prayers; his mother passed away this weekend. He has not been with us this week.) Cleaning supplies have been stockpiled and more are being ordered and arriving with regularity.

We had our first faculty gathering earlier this week. It was great seeing firsthand all the wonderful things that many of you have told me about our staff. The collegiality, the collaboration, the brainstorming, the synergy was good for my soul. We are blessed to have this team of dedicated educators. Their preparation for the tasks ahead of us gives me great hope that we have this and will do very good things with the business at hand. While we still have many questions for ourselves, we still have 17 days to plan to be great.

My final thoughts this evening ...

After meeting this afternoon with our architect volunteers, we feel comfortable with our solution to create safe, socially distanced spaces in what were originally thought to be problematic areas. While this will not be the case, we are planning spaces as if 100 percent of our children were returning and adjusting for fewer in actual attendance. Your commitment will be quarter-by-quarter. We only need a commitment form from those who are electing distance learning for Quarter 1. Families may opt into distance learning if for some reason their child or children need to be away from the school building

after the start of the first quarter. Instead of a blanket statement here, we will work with you, family by family, if other arrangements need to be made.

There are families who have told me that they cannot make a decision until their questions are answered or more of the plan is revealed. If this note did not help you in your discernment, we have extended the Friday, Aug. 7, deadline until we can provide you more information to make an informed decision. Feel free to stop by and see me, if that would be easier. As of 1 p.m. today, I now have a desk, a chair, and a room that I can call my own! My door is always open for you.

God's Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Greg Sturgill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "D" and "G".

Greg Sturgill