



November 15, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

By this time in a regular school year, Bishop Malooly and I would have visited students and staff at more than half the number of our parish, diocesan, and private Catholic schools in the Diocese of Wilmington. At the conclusion of the visits, Bishop always assigns “homework” to the students, namely, to be sure they thank you for the sacrifices made to provide them with a Catholic school education. As we approach Thanksgiving and reflect upon blessings in this very different year, Bishop certainly extends his gratitude to you for your continued sacrifices, despite the challenges all of us face, and remembers administrators, faculty, staff, and families in prayer.

As of today our COVID-positive statistics for our 19 parish and diocesan schools are as follows:

53 student cases out of 6027 students
5 staff cases out of 786 staff members

47 cases in the 14 schools in Delaware
11 cases in the five schools on Maryland’s Eastern Shore

All cases have been in the mild to moderate range.
School transmissions have not occurred; transmissions have occurred outside of schools.

November and December bring occasions for both holiday travel and gatherings of friends and family. The CDC as well as the state divisions/departments of public health remind us that relaxing our COVID-compliant behaviors will result in unfortunate consequences for us and others. More information about holiday travel and gatherings is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>.

The Catholic Schools Office, in line with the CDC and state health offices, strongly recommends that you choose responsible actions regarding holiday travel and gatherings. Mask wearing, social distancing, hand washing, and wellness checks should be maintained throughout the holidays. Avoiding gatherings beyond the immediate family or cohort demonstrates an attitude of care for family, friends, and self.

A protocol for quarantining following holiday travel or gatherings will not be mandated by the Catholic Schools Office. If you believe you need to quarantine following holiday travel or gathering, then you should self-impose the quarantine for your benefit and the benefit of those

with whom you will interact. Such action is a matter of personal integrity where we act responsibly for the good of everyone.

As students leave school for the holidays, they will take with them all they may need, should it become necessary to shift on short notice to a fully virtual environment after the holidays. At this time such a shift is not anticipated. If a decision needs to be made, your local school administration in consultation with the Catholic Schools Office will jointly make a decision for your school. A diocesan-wide decision will not be announced given the breadth of the diocese and the differences in schools in Delaware and on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

Cycle 2 in the diocesan COVID plan closes at Thanksgiving. Cycle 3 will begin the Monday after Thanksgiving (November 30) and conclude on Dr. Martin Luther King Day (January 18). At this time, given the rising COVID positivity numbers, requests by hybrid schools to change their current configurations for Cycle 3 are on hold, until we see what the return from the holidays bring.

Since September I have had the opportunity to visit all but two of our 19 parish and diocesan elementary and secondary schools. It has been impressive to witness all that has been done to make schools COVID-compliant for students and staff. I am very thankful for the work that has been done in environment and in instruction to support teaching and learning in our schools. Administrators, teachers, and staff deserve our sincerest gratitude and the support of families merits our heartfelt appreciation.

May Thanksgiving be a time to recall God's bountiful blessings to each of us and to offer Him thanks and praise.

Sincerely,

Louis P. De Angelo

Louis P. De Angelo, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools