



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT ❖ OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS & CENTERS
Pastoral Center ❖ PO Box 40200 ❖ St. Petersburg, FL, 33743-0200 ❖ PH: 727-347-5539 ❖ Fax: 727-341-6848

Dear Catholic School Parents and Guardians,

November 19, 2020

As we approach Thanksgiving and the season of Advent, I would like to give you an update on the status of our Catholic schools in regard to Covid-19 and ask for your help as we move forward. There are 46 Catholic schools and Early Childhood Centers in the Diocese of St. Petersburg, ministering to nearly 12,000 children in Pinellas, Hillsborough, Pasco, Hernando, and Citrus Counties. I am very proud of the planning and perseverance of our educators and children throughout this school year.

The Office of Catholic Schools and Centers has been continually tracking all reported cases of Covid-19 in students and employees. When a positive case occurs at a Catholic school, parents at that school are always notified. To give you more information, below is a list of the numbers of students and employees who have reported testing positive (both symptomatic and asymptomatic) for Covid-19 across all schools and centers in the Diocese.

DOSP Students: 75 or 0.63% of the student population
DOSP Employees: 26 or 2.17% of the employee population
Total Cases in Florida (all ages): 905,248 or 4.21% of the total population

It is our goal to continue with face-to-face instruction and when necessary, quarantine appropriate groups of students and employees according to CDC Guidelines. We do not want to close school buildings and/or revert to online/distance learning for all students. However, we cannot do this without the partnership of our parents and families.

In a briefing today (Thursday, November 19), the CDC's Dr. Henry Walke said that there is "no more important time than now for each and every American to redouble our efforts to watch our distance, wash our hands and, most importantly, wear a mask," before advising that the **"CDC is recommending against travel during the Thanksgiving period. For Americans who decide to travel, CDC recommends doing so as safely as possible by following the same recommendations for everyday living."**

The choices and plans we all make for Thanksgiving and Christmas will affect our ability to keep schools open and safe. We understand that all families have unique circumstances and situations. Travel increases the exposure to additional people who may be infected with Covid-19. With regard to school attendance, we ask that you err on the side of caution if your child has symptoms of Covid or has exposure to someone infected with Covid-19 over these next few months. This means keeping children home and getting them tested if one of these situations applies. Please note that you should wait 4-5 days after potential exposure to get tested.

The CDC offers the following considerations when planning to host or attend a holiday celebration.



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- Assess current COVID-19 levels in your community to determine whether to postpone, cancel or limit the number of attendees.
- Check Community levels of cases
- Have your gathering take place out-of-doors if possible
- Gatherings that last longer pose more risk than shorter gatherings
- Limit the size of your gathering by following the laws in place in the state where you may be gathering. Florida recommends limits of up to 10 people.
- Gatherings of people attending from various locations is a higher risk than gatherings with attendees who live in the same area
- Behaviors that include social distancing, mask wearing, handwashing, etc. are important and pose less risk than not enforcing these behaviors.

More information can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays/thanksgiving.html>

On behalf of the Office of Catholic Schools and all of our educators, I wish you a very happy and safe Thanksgiving and Advent.

Sincerely in Christ,

Christopher L. Pastura
Superintendent of Catholic Schools and Centers
Diocese of St. Petersburg