November 24, 2020

Dear Catholic Elementary School Parents and Guardians:

As we embark on the holiday season in this exceptional year, I would like to thank you for your continued support of Catholic education. Our schools anchor their communities in these challenging times, with principals, teachers, and staff going above and beyond in their dedication. We have asked them to move mountains this year, and they have done so without resistance because they believe in our mission and love their students. In recent days, however, they have shared with me that they are concerned about the uptick in Covid and their observations of increasingly risky behaviors on the part of some school families.

I am proud of our safety record and all the efforts you have made to achieve it. The combination of cohorts, distancing, masks, and hygiene has kept our students as safe at school as anywhere; our infection rates are much lower than in the general population, which means that our protocols are working. As our counties have moved back into the purple tier, we have seen cohorts in several schools need to quarantine due to someone in the group testing positive with Covid. We have had more than one Covid cluster in a school linked to an off-campus student party. I understand the social pressure, exhaustion, and desire for normalcy for our kids that lead us to say yes to such events, but this is no time to get complacent. To quote Bishop Soto's message of last week, "The coming Advent season reminds us of the need to remain vigilant. With greater reason we must remain vigilant and steadfast in caring for one another, especially for the sake of the most vulnerable among us." Our protocols work, but they require changes by students in their conduct, teachers in their practice, and you in your supervision. They will only work when we all follow through on them every single time, always.

By coming back to campus, we have made a commitment to each other that our first priority is the safety of our students' cohorts. We all must do our part in limiting the spread of Covid, and if you have traveled out of state, been in large groups, or been around someone with a confirmed case, your duty in limiting that spread is to keep your student learning remotely from home for fourteen days, and we are updating our policies to reflect that. I know that some of you have to travel, and we are not here to judge those decisions, but the objective concerns remain. Having your students learn remotely in such circumstances shows empathy for the others in the cohort, and it will slow the rate of growth in the community. I am attaching a copy of the checklist all families will need to complete on the day they return to campus after Thanksgiving break.

St. Francis and Jesuit High Schools have pioneered preventive testing by schools in the area, and we are considering expanding testing to other schools as well, starting with a pilot program with middle school students. I have asked principals to consider opting into a pilot program I hope to launch in the coming days. We are all concerned about how the community may respond to broad preventive testing, so I want to offer the following about what we've learned from our experience at St. Francis and Jesuit High Schools: it's worked. Every week, our preventive tests have identified members of the community who are Covid-positive and asymptomatic. In combination with our on-campus protocols and off-campus social distancing, tests offer an additional layer of protection as we work to keep our schools safe.

We are still a long way off from this being over; vaccines are on the horizon, but we aren't there yet. In the meantime, we have to stay committed to following the guidelines we have in place. We know they work when we all do our part in following them. I understand the pain that many of you feel as a result of this pandemic, economically, socially, and emotionally. It's hard to limit contact with people we love. At the same time, we cannot take for granted all that we've accomplished in these past months in service to our students. Being back in class is a blessing, and I thank you for doing your part to keep our schools open and safe.

Please know that your principal, the Catholic School Department, and I are always available for questions or concerns. Thank you for choosing Catholic education.

Peace,

Lincoln Snyder
Superintendent and Executive Director of Schools
The Diocese of Sacramento

November 30, 2020

In order for your child(ren) to return to on-campus learning, post-Thanksgiving break, please answer the following questions:

1. My child(ren) has (have) been in contact with anyone who currently has tested positive for COVID-19.

     _____ Yes (True) _____ No (False)

2. During Thanksgiving break, did members of your household travel out of state or country?

     _____ Yes   _____ No

3. During Thanksgiving break, did your household gather at any time with more than two other households?

     _____ Yes   _____ No

If you answered "Yes" to any of the above questions, your child(ren) will need to be remote learners through December 11th.

If you have answered "No" to these questions, please continue with this questionnaire and answer the following:

1. Does your student have one of the following symptoms?

Fever of 100.4 or greater and/or chills	Yes	No
Cough	Yes	No
Difficulty breathing	Yes	No
Loss of taste/smell	Yes	No

    If you answered "Yes" to any of the above symptoms, your child(ren) will need to be remote learners and may return per policy.

2.   Does your student have two or more of the following symptoms?

Congestion/running nose	Yes	No
Nausea/vomiting/diarrhea	Yes	No
Sore throat	Yes	No
Headache	Yes	No
Fatigue/muscle or body aches	Yes	No

    If you answered "Yes" to any two of the above symptoms, your child(ren) will need to be remote learners and may return per policy.

I certify that the answers to the above questions are true to the best of my knowledge.

_____   _____   _____
Parent Signature   Date   Student Name(s)/Grade(s)