



March 13, 2020

Dear Principals and School Leaders:

As of 9 a.m. on Friday, March 13, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee is not recommending a blanket shutdown of its Catholic schools due to the national Coronavirus outbreak. Each of our 102 schools located throughout the 10 counties of southeastern Wisconsin has individual needs and different circumstances.

The well-being of our school communities is a top priority. We are taking precautions to limit the spread across our schools and are encouraging schools to immediately implement recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Wisconsin Department of Health.

We also encourage schools to work directly with their local health department experts to fully understand the impact of Coronavirus in their local community and to determine whether a school closure is necessary. We further encourage collaboration with the local public school district regarding the situation. Ultimately the decision to stay open or to close needs to be made by the local governing authority of the school. The CDC has just released [\*Considerations for School Closure\*](#), which should help your decision-making process.

Foundational to the identity of a Catholic school is the opportunity for students and staff to participate in the celebration of the Mass, receive the Sacraments, and pray in a variety of ways. These opportunities should continue to be offered, and school leaders should reference the previously published [\*Liturgical & Pastoral Suggestions in the Event of a Viral Outbreak\*](#) for further guidance.

Leadership of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee strongly recommends that every Catholic school within the archdiocese immediately postpone all non-essential functions, especially those in which attendees gather from a wide range of areas, such as multiple schools, and particularly if the functions involve sustained interaction between attendees in close physical proximity. This includes, but is not limited to, all co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, such as:

- All grade school athletics, including the Padre Serra Tournament, spring sports, and high school-sponsored junior programs.  
High schools will follow the lead of the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) regarding competitive athletics. We will support any high school that may choose to suspend its athletic offerings, regardless of WIAA decisions.
- Forensics meets or other academic competitions involving multiple schools
- Concerts, plays, musicals
- Field trips

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- School-sponsored trips that may be overnight and / or out-of-state

Further consideration should be given to in-school events in which a large number of people gather or persons from at-risk groups or of unknown exposure enter the school. These include, but are not limited to:

- All-school assemblies
- Outside guests / presenters to students
- Grandparent / VIP events

The recommendation for these postponements comes after significant reflection, discussion, and deliberation and is consistent with other actions across the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

**We are urging our all Catholic schools to cancel or postpone non-essential functions until at least April 1, 2020, when we will reassess the status of the situation.**

The Office for Schools will be providing schools with guidance on alternative ways to continue the quality learning of our students in the event face-to-face instruction is interrupted for a significant period of time. Should one or more of our schools need to close, we are currently working with local school leaders to find learning opportunities for students both online and in print, as well as alternative meal program options.

As you know, this is a rapidly changing situation. We continue to pray for all of the communities affected by this virus and hope that, with continued efforts in hand-washing hygiene, social distancing, and thorough disinfection, we can make significant strides to “flatten the bell curve” of the outbreak within our communities.

Sincerely,

**KATHLEEN A. CEPELKA, PH.D.**  
*Superintendent of Catholic Schools*

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