



# Diocese of Winona-Rochester

Office of Catholic Schools  
Marsha Stenzel, Superintendent

Dear Parents,

As we begin November, a month of gratitude of the many blessings God has granted each of us amidst the trials of this pandemic, we appreciate and recognize all each of you have sacrificed to keep our school communities thriving. You have partnered with us to make every day a good, healthy and safe one. Your sacrifices do not go unnoticed and we know we could not have done it without your support. Our Catholic school communities pride its partnerships with parents and families as a core element of strength.

This fall we welcome over 350 new students to Catholic schools throughout our Diocese. It is a privilege to bring education rich in faith and virtue to so many new families. Please spread the good news and witness the excellence in Catholic education.

Our hope and prayer continue to maintain an in-person learning mode. We are realistically planning for hybrid or distance learning if the health and safety of our students and staff require us to move into that learning model. As we move towards Thanksgiving and Christmas, we want to remain vigilant and not let our COVID safety guard down. Transmission and the prevalence of COVID-19 can lead to learning model changes. Together we have shown that our diligence in the first two months of the academic year has allowed us to maintain our plan to learn together in person. Our goal of returning to face-to-face learning after the school's breaks will require discipline and planning on everyone's part. With health and safety in mind, think creatively on how you may be able to enjoy celebrations in a different way by using social media and some fun family time with games and zooming across the highways and byways. A virtual "over the river and through the woods" may be the best way to gather.

Please refer to the guidance your school has provided regarding gatherings, hygiene, travel, health checks, healthy eating and sleeping habits, social distancing, and wearing masks. Remember, our decisions and practices can impact our learning model. Please make every effort to share this community responsibility so our students can continue to thrive together in our schools.

Our principals have asked me to express to you their deep appreciation for your commitment to safely keeping our students in school. We recognize and appreciate all of the ways you have helped our school communities flourish during these last seven months by helping your students learn and understand new routines such as the daily health checks and hygiene protocols, supplying necessary materials and adjusting to changes that may have come to schedules, transportation, and snacks/lunches. The way you have approached this year with agility and understanding has tremendously helped the school leaders, faculty, staff, and volunteers make every day in school a good, healthy, and safe one. Your sacrifices do not go unnoticed and we know we could not have done it without your support. I have long boasted of the Catholic school community and how the school-home partnership is a core element in the strength of our community. This has been strikingly evident and is the reason we are able to have a successful school year within a pandemic. You make what we do possible, and we are grateful.

Amidst the challenge of change, remember to be grateful, believing that this unprecedented time will eventually come to an end. May our sacrifices of 2020 bear fruit in 2021 and beyond. Jesus asks each of us to be watchful and alert, so we might recognize the signs of Christ in our midst.

God Bless you and your family during the upcoming holy season.

Sincerely in Christ,

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