

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Across the twelve-county territory of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis are 91 Catholic schools with over 3700 employees serving over 29,000 students in prekindergarten through 12th grade.

After careful consideration of the recommendations of the Minnesota Department of Health, the decision of Governor Tim Walz to close public schools from Wednesday, March 18 through Friday, March 27, and review of the decisions of universities and other educational programs in Minnesota, and out of an abundance of concern that the effort may help shield the young, vulnerable populations, and the elderly from the possibility of contracting COVID-19, student access to all Catholic elementary and high schools in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis will be suspended on or before March 18, 2020 and remain closed at least through March 27.

Consistent with earlier guidance, the Archdiocese recommends that Catholic schools gather their teachers either this week or the week of March 22 to plan for how best to provide continuation of learning. We look to local Catholic schools for how best to engage students next week and through the end of the month.

These are extraordinary times and Catholic schools are served by extraordinary people. As the situation continues to develop, Catholic schools will evaluate how to best serve students in this difficult period. This will take time and patience. Catholic schools partner with parents in the education of their children. The present moment is an opportunity for us to work together with parents on how best to serve the needs of students. We do not have all the solutions today, and given the national emergency, we do not have to have all this figured out today. Today, the Lord's Day, is a good time to step back from all of this and, trusting in the help of God, reflect on what this situation means for your family. We urge families, parents, pastors, heads of school and teachers to collaborate and assist in this educational endeavor. Together we can meet these challenges.

During this period of closure, it is important to note that school buildings will be inaccessible to children, parents, or community members. Local Catholic schools will provide more guidance in the days ahead.

Our Catholic schools are served by tremendous teachers, staff, pastors, and leaders, who we stand in solidarity with at this time.

Please join Archbishop Hebda and me in praying for children and families affected by these closures and for those suffering from this illness.

Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens
Vicar for Catholic Education