



October 30, 2020

Office of Schools

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I pray you and your family are doing well. This past Sunday was the 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time in our Church's liturgical calendar. The Gospel reading for that day came from St. Matthew and focused on what was the greatest commandment. Jesus replied, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind... You shall love your neighbor as yourself." It is in challenging times like this pandemic, fiscal recession, social intolerance and election period that we need to recall these greatest of the commandments most of all. As a community of faith, we must remember to be patient when life is not "normal"; we must be kind to others as Jesus has shown us; and must work to find God in all things and all people we encounter.

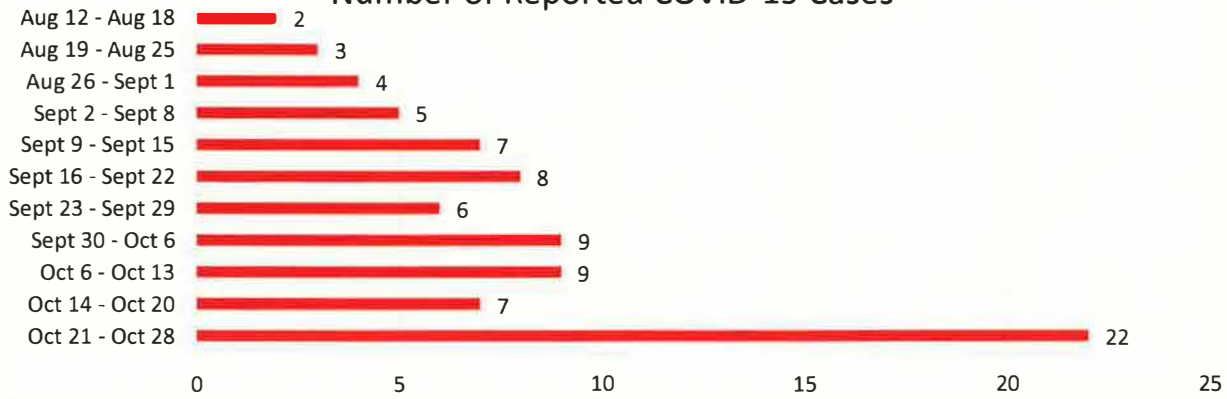
I wanted to update you since my last communication just before schools opened. We had a successful start to our school year and the extra time for preparing our facilities has paid off. Our teachers have been amazing and I want to thank them for their commitment in this challenging time. Although it has been a long few months, a new norm has been established within our 42 school communities.

We currently have approximately 10,000 students and 1,200 teachers in our buildings, and approximately 3,000 students learning virtually from home. The end of the first trimester grading period is nearing, so I encourage you to review your child's progress in the FACTS system and speak with your child's teacher if you have any questions. It is important to recognize virtual learning has been important during this crisis. It is equally important to recognize it may not be the optimal learning structure for every student. All students are unique learners and one-size does not fit all, so regular communication with the teacher and school administration is important during this hybrid learning process.

We have experienced positive cases of COVID-19 in many of our schools frequently due to activities and exposure outside of the school. The good thing is the safety protocols set in place by the diocese have eliminated spread within our classrooms. I know that some of these processes are inconvenient especially two-week quarantines; however, the safety of our students and teachers is paramount. We continue to work closely with our local health departments and will continue this process as long as needed. We will continue to follow current safety measures and offer hybrid learning until there is general distribution of a vaccine as a protection following Florida state guidance.

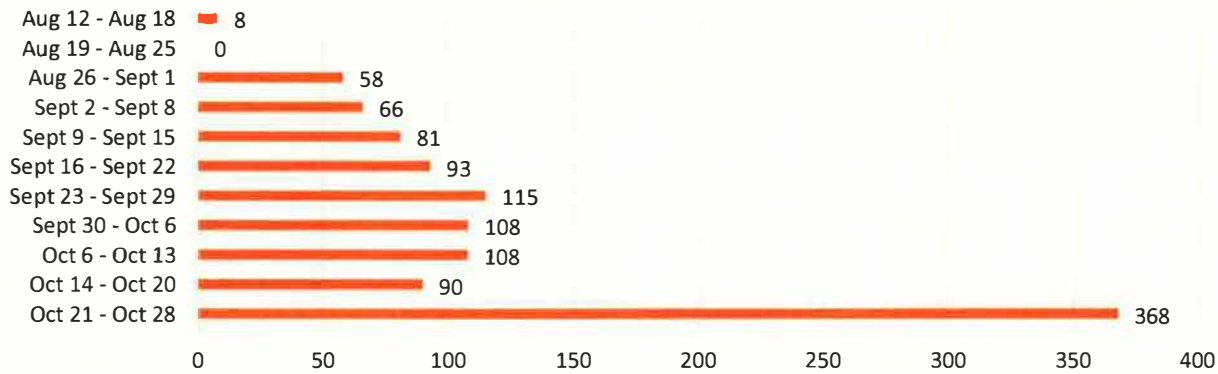
I would like to bring to your attention that in the past two weeks we have seen a significant increase in students or family members testing positive due to activities outside of school. Please remember if someone in your household exhibits symptoms, communicate this to the school administration and keep your child home especially as we enter cold season. As the holiday season approaches, there are concerns among health officials about the impact of our social gatherings and the increase in positive cases. I bring this to your attention because our safety protocols will remain so we may see greater numbers of students quarantined at two-week intervals depending on social behaviors. Below is a graph that demonstrates the recent uptick in cases in our schools as general social activities around central Florida have resumed.

Number of Reported COVID-19 Cases



Positive COVID-19 cases are tracked by the Office of Catholic Schools in collaboration with local health departments. The graph represents all reported positive cases for students and staff in all Catholic schools throughout the Diocese of Orlando.

Number Quarantined Due to Reported COVID-19 Exposure



Quarantine numbers for positive COVID-19 cases are tracked by the Office of Catholic Schools. The graph represents the number of students and staff quarantined in all Catholic schools located throughout the Diocese of Orlando.

Thank you for choosing a Catholic education for your child. You have many options, but only one that is grounded in our faith. Only one option fosters your child's understanding and relationship with the Creator to support them in this life and the next. Only one option helps them discover their gifts and talents; and, most importantly, how to use them in service to others. Catholic education doesn't just expand the mind, it nurtures the soul and forms the entire child. I will continue to update you throughout this year as we walk together through this crisis with our trust placed in God's loving hands.

Peace and blessings,

Henry Fortier
 Secretary for Education/
 Superintendent of Catholic Schools