

March 23, 2020 – 10:15 am



Dear GTACS Parents,

School has now been closed for one week in an effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, and I want to touch base with you during this challenging time in our country, in our state, in our town, in our homes, and in our Church. Although life in general feels so completely strange, it is interesting to note that on April 6, we will have missed fewer days of school this year than we did last year because of snow days...really!

There's a degree of morose or sadness everywhere I go. I never, ever thought I would feel bad about entering a three-quarter empty grocery store with short checkout lines. My doctor canceled all non-critical appointments including my well visit check-up, and I found myself feeling a strange disappointment when I would usually be grateful for one less meeting on my calendar.

No reception of the Eucharist during Lent? Beyond strange! I have to admit that trying to find spiritual communion without the Eucharist has been a challenge for me. It is also stretching me in a healthy and necessary way. I pray that you are finding God's presence in new and meaningful ways. However, I will be thrilled to have the Eucharist back when the time is appropriate.

I don't know what unusual things your family experienced this week, but nobody can escape them. Society is certainly being forced to practice empathy, and God has given us a great opportunity be witnesses to our children in this time of crisis. I imagine all of us are experiencing the effects of this virus in some ways, and we certainly know families deeply affected by this virus through personal illness, caretaking needs, or financial burden. So many prayers are needed during this difficult time.

I wish this pandemic would have started in late May, so school wasn't such a big piece of the oddities in today's world, but it did not. It is happening now. The schools will do our best to keep the kids moving forward. Our elementary students have plenty of work to keep them working for the next couple of weeks. Our grade 6-12 students are working diligently to keep moving forward in a meaningful and objective-driven manner. I am so pleased with the commitment level being demonstrated by our faculty and staff. They are the most dedicated educators I can imagine.

Many of you may have seen Governor Whitmer's recent statement that the Michigan Department of Education is indicating that instruction during school closures will not count towards qualified educational time, regardless of the effectiveness of alternative delivery of instruction. I imagine that the position is somewhat fluid, as the virus will dictate a variety of unpredictable situations. It is important for you to know that we are, and will continue to be, keenly aware of the State of Michigan's plan for education during this time, however, we are not entirely beholden to its directives and mandates.

Our plan is to deliver as much instruction as possible over the time of our schools' closure no matter if it is three weeks or more. As unpredictable as the pandemic situation is, I can tell you, definitively,

that our schools will always focus on the amount of information the students have learned, and whether or not we have prepared them for success moving forward. We will make decisions that are in the best interest of your children and your family. Any adjustments we make to the delivery of instruction and/or duration of instruction will be based on necessary educational outcomes and preparedness.

Lastly, yet most importantly, I pray that your family is able to use this time as an opportunity to develop prayer and devotional practices that stay with your family for a lifetime. Over the past week, both of our college-age sons have been home with their 11-year old brother, Gus. Mindy and I have been thankful for this time to dig into Scripture as a family, pray together in a less time bound setting, and enjoy listening more attentively to each other's faith journey. What a blessing! It has served as such a great reminder that God gives us what we need, not what we want. I hope your time together is filled with faithful graces that only He can provide.

This is a great time to pray the Memorare!

Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession, was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your mercy, hear and answer me. Amen.

May God bless our world with restored health and peace.

Know of my prayers,

Michael R. Buell
Superintendent