

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC
ARCHDIOCESE OF ATLANTA



August 3, 2020

Dear Archdiocesan Catholic School Family,

Since my July 20, 2020 communication announcing the opening of our archdiocesan schools, our schools have continued to work diligently to safely welcome back our students in the coming days. As conscientious community leaders, and as your partners in the educational formation of the children placed into the care of our schools, we fully realize and share responsibility for making informed decisions regarding the intense, unwavering, and dynamic risk assessment required during this public health crisis. Therefore, you understand the heavy weight that rests upon the shoulders of our dedicated Catholic school administrators, teachers and staff.

As we have made clear in prior communications, there are risks to bringing our students and teachers back to school. We acknowledge, humbly, that in spite of following the latest infectious disease and epidemiologic guidance to prevent spread in our schools, there could be exposure to the virus. However, when weighing the risks versus the benefits and all the efforts to make schools as safe as we possibly can, we continue to believe the benefits of opening our schools to in-school instruction are greater. For those parents uncomfortable with in-school instruction at the present time, we will continue to offer the option of on-line instruction for a length of time to be determined by the school.

Parental cooperation in support of school expectations regarding the COVID-19 protocols the schools have developed based on federal and public health guidelines will be of critical importance in mitigating the risks and creating the safest environment possible. This parental cooperation includes behavior outside of the school's control; namely, the expectation that they will do all within their power to mitigate spread as well as have compassion for others' choices. In order to be successful in our return to school, we all share in the responsibility of our own and each other's well-being.

There are multiple prevalence measures which have been reported as guidelines for when to move through phases of reopening during a pandemic. These benchmarks are based on past viruses, current knowledge of this novel coronavirus, epidemiologic expertise and calculations. I recognize that Georgia is exceeding all of these and appreciate concerns about reopening our schools when the number trends are where they are currently. But again, with mitigation strategies in place and faithfully practiced, the benefits to our children in returning to school continues to move our archdiocesan schools forward. The planned protocols and procedures continue to meet or exceed recommendations from health officials as well as those in executive orders.

I want to assure you that we will remain informed and steadfast in our school reopening plans. I will continue to monitor and assess the ongoing pandemic and support our schools as they plan for reopening, fully realizing that our schools may have to shift to a 100% virtual delivery method if it is determined that the risks outweigh the benefits.

Finally, I encourage you to join me in praying for all the members of our Catholic school community as we carefully and enthusiastically enter into this new school year, especially through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, patroness of the Archdiocese of Atlanta. May God give us all wisdom and courage as we move forward with opening our schools – firm in faith, joyful in hope, and active in charity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hal Plummer', written over a horizontal line.

Hal Plummer

Superintendent of Schools