



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF METUCHEN

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March 15, 2020

Dear Parents,

As you all face the challenge of managing responses to the coronavirus on many levels: your own personal, for your families and also on professional levels, I want you to be assured of my prayers for you and your families. You have had such extra burdens placed on you during this time. I want to thank you for your cooperation with our schools as they continue to navigate these uncharted waters too. I am so grateful for our committed and resilient administrators, staff and students. We can and will continue to work together so that our schools continue to transmit the faith and intellectual formation they are known for, while working with you to calm your children's fears and encouraging best practices to contain the virus' spread.

While there has been no diagnosis of any student, faculty or staff from any of our schools with the coronavirus, every Catholic school in the diocese has now been closed for some planned period following the lead of our local municipalities. At this time, I am asking that all schools stay closed and teach remotely for at least the next 2 weeks. We will reevaluate the situation at that time. During this time, we will monitor the situation and continue to communicate with you. We will be working closely with your local school to keep you updated. Hopefully this will allow for you to plan your situations better while practicing appropriate social distancing. As you already know, our principals and faculty members have prepared extensive plans for remote learning. It will be important to follow these lessons so that each day spent in remote learning during this school closure will help to provide a level of comfort to your family as it provides consistency of learning. Please check the Diocese of Metuchen's website for resources and the most current information on our response to the coronavirus: diometuchen.org/coronavirus.

Our faith is certainly a treasure which over the last 2 millennia has seen people through all kinds of crises and challenging situations. Our Lord is with us through this all. Our mother Mary certainly guides her children and places us under her mantle. Let us take comfort under her care and teach our children to do the same, while following the directives of our civic leaders and using best practices for rigorous health practices. We know, ultimately, we rely upon and trust in our Lord. He is always with us. He has sacrificed Himself for us, and He does not abandon us in our need. Lent reminds us of this and draws us closer to Him through our own sacrificial practices. We did not know what sacrifices this Lent would bring as we began Lent this year. We pray that the joys of Easter will likewise be heightened for us too! It is an important moment for

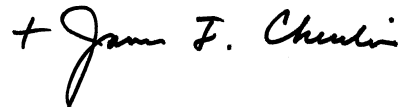
us to teach our children about the benefit of faith in our lives especially in times of personal, familial or even national or near global struggle.

As we follow the directives of the New Jersey Department of Health and Human Services and work together for the common good to try to prevent the spread of the virus, we also join together in prayer. I know that the closure of our schools places another burden on working parents, but also that many parents are happy to have their children home at this time too. While I am deeply saddened by this whole situation, I know that we are joined together in praying for the health of our students, their families, our dedicated faculties, administrators and staffs, and for all our people. On December 12, 2019, I was able to pray with your children as we prayed to Our Lady of Guadalupe in our consecration service. During that time, I asked each of them to say a Hail Mary each day for some special person or event. I hope you will join them in that prayer as we all ask Our Blessed Mother to assist us in this hour of our need.

Be assured of my prayers and love for you, and please remember to pray for me too.

With renewed best wishes, I remain

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James F. Checchio". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

Most Reverend James F. Checchio, JCD, MBA
Bishop of Metuchen



PRAYER IN TIME OF OUR COMMON NEED

In response to the spread of COVID-19 within our communities

Diocese of Metuchen, New Jersey

*This prayer replaces the usual Prayer over the People
before the final blessing and dismissal
The Priest may pray this prayer on behalf of the people
or if printed for the people it may be prayed by all together.*

**Our Lady of Guadalupe, mother of God
and of the people of Metuchen
you always shine on our path
as a sign of salvation and hope.
We rely on you, Health of the Sick,
you who, at the cross, united with Jesus' pain,
keeping steadfast your faith.
You, Salvation of God's people,
you know what we need
and we are sure that you will provide for us,
as at Cana of Galilee,
after the adversity of these days,
may joy and celebration return.
Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform to the will of the Father
and to do what we are told by Jesus,
who has taken our suffering upon Himself
and has burdened Himself with our sorrows
to lead us through the cross,
to the joy of resurrection. Amen.**

**Under your protection, Holy Mother of God,
Our Lady of Guadalupe, we seek refuge,
hear our prayer and intercede for us to the Father
so that we may be free from every danger,
Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.**

*This prayer has been adapted for the people of the Diocese of Metuchen from a prayer
given to the people of Rome by Pope Francis.*

Then the Priest concludes as usual with the final blessing.