

D I O C E S E  
of NEW ULM

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**Office of the Bishop**

July 23, 2020

Dear Catholic school families and stakeholders,

Warm greetings to your communities! I am pleased to welcome our new director of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of New Ulm, Dr. Michelle Kramer. She joins us during a time fraught with questions regarding the re-opening of schools after last spring's distance learning programs. While teachers in our diocese proceeded with valiant efforts during distance learning, we know that this model was far from ideal, and we are excited to open our doors once again and continue to provide excellent academic programming infused with Gospel values. The health of our students, teachers, and families remains a top priority, yet we recognize the value that face-to-face learning has in meeting our students' academic, social, emotional, and spiritual needs. Toward that end, we plan to open our schools in the fall – with careful planning using the guidance of the Center for Disease Control, Catholic Mutual, the Minnesota Department of Health, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Minnesota diocesan directors/superintendents have been working together to assist principals and teachers in preparing plans for their re-opening. Dr. Kramer has been working with Catholic school leaders and public school officials throughout the state to identify best practices and provide recommendations for our schools. Each school will create specific re-opening plans using guidance provided by our diocese and the aforementioned institutions. The plans will include procedures for operations, community, curriculum and instruction, health and safety, and Catholic identity. Many schools are forming task forces to create these plans, and they will then be made available to school families. We understand that the coronavirus has not gone away and that all planning will need to be flexible as we adjust to changing circumstances. Our goal is to continue to provide an excellent, Christ-centered education while maintaining the health and safety of our students and staff.

Our school parents are to be commended for their tremendous commitment to their children's success, during distance learning especially. The experience again demonstrated the valuable teacher – parent partnership. Thank you for your commitment to Catholic education and willingness to allow us to assist you in your role as the primary educators of your children.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the principals and school staff throughout the diocese who have gone, and continue to go, the extra mile to meet the needs of our community. May God bless and reward each of you as you continue to share the Good News amidst these times of trial.

As a Church, we understand the value of community. Our separation from the Eucharist during the months during the shelter-in-place order reminded us of how very much we need Jesus and each other. May we continue to pray for health and healing, and may we do our level best to make the return to schools a smooth process for our young people.

In Christ,



The Most Reverend John M. LeVoir  
Bishop of New Ulm

