



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

MEMORANDUM

Re: Norms for School Ministry 2020-2021
in View of the COVID-19 Pandemic

To: Pastors, Associates, Pastoral Ministers and Educators

From: Monsignor Murray J. Kroetsch, PH, VG
Chancellor

Date: August 20, 2020

As you are aware, this September the return to school will be significantly different than at any other time. Ever-changing plans for re-opening, shifting realities of the spread of Covid-19 in varying areas, and new and changing public health guidelines means that parents, students, teachers and staff have experienced an unprecedented time of uncertainty and anxiety over the last several weeks rather than the restoration that the Summer is meant to provide. Directors of Education, Trustees, principals and teachers in particular have felt the weight of the responsibility to ensure a safe return to school in such uncertain times.

In recognition of this difficult time in schools, the following will provide direction for your pastoral ministry in schools this Fall.

- There will be no in-person classroom visits by Priests or other Parish staff for at least the first few months in order to allow schools to settle into routines that preserve the safety of all.
- There will be no school Masses— even online – for the first few months of the year.
- Pastors can encourage and support classroom prayer services for the beginning of the year – with or without online presence.
- No celebrations of the Sacrament of Reconciliation may take place in schools this Fall; Pastors may encourage or support penitential celebrations in the context of a Liturgy of the Word, particularly during Advent.
- Pastors are to discuss with principals the most appropriate way to communicate with schools regarding celebrations of the Sacraments of First Eucharist and Confirmation for those who were delayed in the Spring. Principals should have received the *2020 Liturgical Norms* from the Diocese already. If not, please feel free to share them.

These norms will be reviewed at the end of this calendar year and revised, as appropriate, in view of the circumstances at that time.

Welcome Back Message

To support our publicly funded Catholic schools in this difficult time, Bishop Crosby has recorded a brief “Welcome Back” message and prayer to open the school year. It will be available shortly on our Diocesan website.

Novena in Anticipation of the Beginning of the School Year

Bishop Crosby is also leading the Diocese of Hamilton in a Novena for the safe return to school beginning Monday August 31st, 2020 (see attached). You are encouraged to make this Novena known and shared among your parishioners. It will be available online on the diocesan website as of early next week. As the first day of school this year is on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, and both our Diocese and our nation are under Our Lady’s protection and dedication, we hope our prayers, joined with our Blessed Mother will bring courage and comfort to all in our school communities that the Lord is with us during this challenging time!