



Diocese of Corpus Christi

*Office of Catholic Schools
Office of the Superintendent*

TO: CATHOLIC SCHOOL LEADERS AND SCHOOL FAMILIES
FROM: Dr. Rosemary J. Henry, Superintendent of Catholic Schools
RE: END OF THE YEAR SCHOOL CEREMONIES FOR EXITING GRADES
DATE: MAY 4, 2020

On April 28, 2020, Governor Abbott issued a statewide order for Phase I reopening of Churches for public in-person worship services effective May 1, 2020. Phase I requires that the population in attendance does not exceed 25% capacity of the Church during this pandemic. Per our Bishop, Most Reverend Michael Mulvey, public Masses, in the Diocese of Corpus Christi, will resume the weekend of May 9 and May 10, 2020 with reduced capacity not to exceed 25%.

Before Governor Abbott's announcement on April 28, 2020, all end of the year school ceremonies **were** to be scheduled from July 5-July 19, 2020 for all Catholic schools in our diocese. As always, decisions are made in the best interest of our youth, our most precious gifts, and school staff members. Celebrating special events are important to our students, families and school communities to recognize important successes and milestones. However, during this health crisis, such celebrations must be balanced with safety precautions.

While I am gravely concerned about the safety and health of our students, teachers, school leaders, parents, grandparents and all of our stakeholders, during the COVID-19, as well as the containment and possible resurgence of this virus, schools MAY proceed as follows:

1. Ceremonies may be held for exiting grades only. (Grades 5, 6, 8, 12)
2. Discuss with the Pastor the possibility of a ceremony for exiting grades in the Church. The Pastor must approve before moving forward. [\(We will continue with our mass and ceremony in the church on May 22nd\)](#)
3. Parents, the primary educators, must be provided with an option for children to attend the ceremony or to not attend. **Special precautions should be taken in light of new reports from the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain and, most recently, the United States, that this virus may be associated with serious and fatal heart disease in children.**
4. All those attending the ceremony may not exceed 25% capacity of the Church.
5. Social distancing of six feet apart must always be observed.
6. All participants, school personnel, students and guests, are encouraged to wear protective masks or other face coverings and gloves.

7. Those who are symptomatic or who have been exposed to another with the virus within 14 days are not permitted to enter the Church, in accordance with national, state and local health directives. **All attendees are asked to check their temperature at home before entering the Church.**
8. Those who are at risk due to underlying health issues and age are strongly encouraged, for their own health, to avoid the risks of attending public events at this time.
9. Steps must be made to ensure that the space is clean and sanitized. (Staff will clean and sanitize)
10. Entrance and exit doors must be designated and monitored.
11. Precaution must be taken to ensure social distancing is maintained during an entire ceremony. Tape placed on the floor, designating where people stand, may assist with this process.
12. **No receptions or social gatherings may ensue after the ceremony or event in the Church plant/facility.**
13. A school may wish to arrange to livestream or video the event for those unable to attend or as a keepsake of the special event. ([We will livestream on Facebook](#))
14. *Request families, before attending a ceremony, to check for symptoms:
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Chills
 - Repeated shaking with chills
 - Muscle pain
 - Headache
 - Sore Throat
 - Loss of taste or smell
 - Diarrhea
 - Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100 degrees
 - Known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19 if exposure to active confirmed case occurred within the last 14 days.
15. *Hand sanitizer or hand washing stations must be available at entrances to the building.
16. *The total number of individuals within proximity during video filming/photos must not exceed five.
17. *Diplomas or other documents may not be handed from person to person unless gloves and mask are worn at all times.
18. Schools should send dates for **Exiting Grade Ceremonies** to the Superintendent by May 13, 2020.

The above criteria, #4-#12, are consistent with our Bishop's directives per his April 30, 2020 communique, regarding Masses, to all Pastors and parishes in our diocese. **Criteria *14-17**

are new and additional guidelines presented by the Texas Education Agency. The criteria presented in this May 4 memo supersedes any previous end of the year Catholic school protocols. **At any time, new directives offered by local/national health agencies and/or Governor Abbott, may be presented that require both a revision to this plan and new action.**

We are all called to do our part in reducing the possible spread of the Coronavirus. Please join me in prayer for the health, safety and well-being of the students entrusted to our care, all leaders, school faculty and staff, serving our Catholic schools, and all school/parish communities. May we be assured that our Master Teacher, who never abandons, will bless us with courage, faith, love and hope during this unprecedented time.