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*Diocese of Belleville*  
*Office of the Bishop*

March 13, 2020

Dear Priests, Deacons, and Principals,

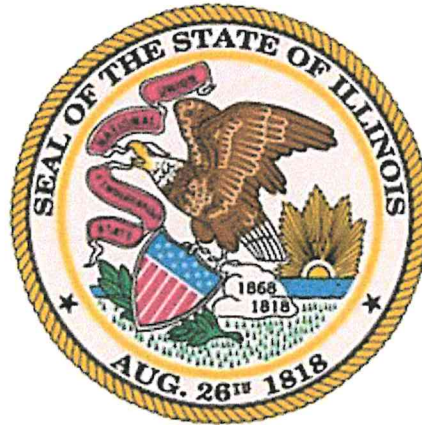
I write to inform you that in keeping with the decree of Jay Robert “J.B.” Pritzker, Governor of Illinois, and in union with the Bishops of the Province of Chicago, it is my duty to inform you of the need to close all Catholic schools in the Diocese of Belleville effective Tuesday, March 17, 2020 through March 30, 2020, in an effort to diminish the spread of the coronavirus. Several cases of infected patients have now been diagnosed in southern Illinois.

I know that this poses a challenge for all school administrators, faculty, staff, students, and families, but this is the course of action that we must follow, not only because of the Governor’s decree, but also because of the advice we received from local, knowledgeable physicians.

Thank you for your cooperation in this situation which has an impact on all our lives.

Appreciatively yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton, Ph.D., S.T.D.  
Bishop of Belleville



Office of the Governor  
JB Pritzker

# Gov. Pritzker Announces Two-Week Statewide School Closure to Minimize COVID-19 Spread

“We’ve seen what happens in places that didn’t move with urgency. I ask all of you not to hesitate to do the right thing for your family, your friends, and your community. One small step at a time, we will get through this together.”

## SCHOOL CLOSURES

Following extensive state-level analysis of coronavirus spread in various countries and the social distancing measures that were put in place, the State is taking the precautionary measure of closing all K-12 schools in the state of Illinois from March 17 through March 30. Schools with a spring break that falls outside of this window should move their spring break to within this timeframe. The Pritzker administration is working to ensure critical support functions remain available to students across the state – including their access to food, child care and safe environments.

Gov. Pritzker has assured school administrators that the state will issue no penalties as a result of this closure. To provide support to school districts across the state, the Illinois State Board of Education will be fully staffed over the coming weekend and during the closure period to work through individualized issues and challenges in each district. An executive order to provide school districts flexibility during this period is forthcoming.

On Thursday, the Illinois State Board of Education was granted a waiver from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to continue providing meals to students in non-group settings. Students receiving free and reduced priced breakfasts and lunches will be able to receive grab-and-go meals each day, with some districts having the ability to deliver and others offering parent pick up.