



To: Diocesan-owned High Schools (CCC, EC, HN, LC, VASJ)

From: Frank W. O'Linn, Ed.D., Superintendent
Amy Butler, Associate Superintendent for Secondary Schools

Date: May 7, 2020

Re: Statement on Graduation Ceremonies for the Diocesan Catholic High Schools

Catholic schools are communities of faith where our students enter as individuals and quickly become family who learn and grow together. The end of the senior year in high school is a time to celebrate the culmination of that growth. The goal of every year-end celebration is to honor each graduate and celebrate as a community, and this year's aim is no different, though we have the added challenge of ensuring the safety of all participants. The state of Ohio has provided [guidance for all schools](#) for the celebration of commencement ceremonies, strongly recommending virtual graduation ceremonies using technology because they are safest. The state also cites a number of other considerations including the ongoing prohibition of mass gatherings, including outdoor ceremonies even if social distancing is achieved.

The Diocesan-owned high schools have been instructed by the Office of Catholic Education to hold virtual graduations. We affirm the direction of the state of Ohio that virtual commencements are the safest, and that we may best achieve our aims of honoring each graduate and celebrating as a community through technology.

Commencement is one part of the year-end rituals, which typically feature a final all-school mass, a senior baccalaureate mass, year-end awards, prom, and other celebrations from sacred to silly. Each school is applying its own creativity to celebrate the class of 2020 in new ways with ingenuity and joy considering the circumstances keeping us physically apart. Each school is also holding a date for later on in the summer. We have a deep desire to celebrate together with our graduates, and we continue to monitor closely the directives and guidance from the state of Ohio as we anticipate the current restrictions will be relaxed gradually. As they change, our future celebrations will evolve with greater clarity.

The current pandemic has presented challenges for all of our students and schools, especially for the class of 2020, from whom much sacrifice has been demanded. We will continue to adapt, as they have in so many areas of student life, in order to celebrate the accomplishments of our individual graduates and their entire school community.