

Message to all schools from the Rt Revd Marcus Stock, Bishop of Leeds, regarding the Coronavirus Crisis

To all teachers, parents, support staff, governors and pupils in Catholic schools

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

At this time, we are living through an unparalleled global crisis. When faced with national emergencies in the past, the people of our country have overcome adversity by relying on their families and local communities for comfort, strength, and indeed, personal contact. However, because of the contagious nature of the COVID19 Coronavirus, many will have to face this challenge in isolation.

Over the last few weeks the leaders, teachers, support staff and governors of our Catholic schools have carried out their responsibilities outstandingly in the face of increasingly difficult circumstances, preparing for the long-term closure of their schools and developing home schooling resources for pupils and parents. For this, we owe them our sincere thanks.

Our prayers are particularly needed for those parents who are now taking up their role as teachers while their children are at home. As parents they are the first educators of their children. Those who are members of the Catholic Church exercise this duty principally by choosing to send their children to Catholic schools wherever and whenever it is possible. However, in these difficult times, the role of all parents of school-aged children as their primary educators will become even more important.

I will certainly be praying for all Catholic schools, and for the teachers and support staff in them, which will remain open for the children of key workers. While our nation's health services are on the front line battling the threat of this pandemic, our schools can play a crucial function in allowing doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals to exercise their vital role treating the sick.

Over the coming weeks and months, the resolve of our country is going to be tested. Each of us will have to play our part, whether by supporting relatives and friends, assisting those in our communities who are vulnerable and in need, by social distancing or by self-isolating if we become ill.

What we must do is pray. Together we must pray for schools, their leaders, teachers, parents and pupils. With this shield of prayer, let us support one another and place all our faith and hope in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the power of his love to save us.

With the assurance of my prayers and every blessing, I remain
Yours in the Lord

+ Marcus

Bishop of Leeds and Chairman of the Catholic Education Service