



BORROMEO SEMINARY

July 1, 2020

Dear Faculty, Staff and Seminarians of the Borromeo Community,

Borromeo Seminary will resume formation and classes beginning on **Friday, August 28th**.

While we await guidelines from the State of Ohio to inform our plans, we welcome you back in the safest possible way that adheres to social and physical distancing requirements. Our focus remains on creating a healthy formational community, centered in Jesus Christ, that allows for a prayerful place of vocational discernment. As St. John Paul II stated in his encyclical *Pastores dabo vobis*, the seminary community is “the essential formational matrix for those preparing for ordained ministry, which itself ‘has radical communitarian form and can only be carried out as a collective work’” (#17).

In order to maintain the collective framework necessary for formation, a task force was established in mid-May to explore various models of what our seminary community might look like in the fall. This was in large part due to the end-of-year assessment data which indicated difficulties and concerns from both students and faculty regarding their experience with the distance learning model in this past spring. The faculty unanimously felt that as a formational community, a face-to-face culture of encounter was the ideal; however, because of the pandemic, certain safety protocols would be necessary on campus. In June, a focus group with seminarians and faculty was held to get feedback on what mode of learning would be preferred, along with what concerns they would have about returning to living on campus.

After consultation especially with Jonathan Sague, Vice-President of Operations, and Dr. Donald Spaner, Board Certified EMS Medical Director, both from University Hospitals, and referencing the Cleveland Clinic’s re-opening protocols found in their guide for educators “Return to School Amid Covid-19,” which incorporates the guidelines set forth from the Center for Disease Control and the Ohio Department of Health, a unanimous consensus was reached for an opening fall semester protocol.

The task force wanted to create an environment of inclusion that is consistent with the guidelines the Diocese of Cleveland put in place for the reopening of parishes. Since community must be balanced between the seminary institution itself (i.e., seminarians, commuter students, faculty, and staff) and the wider public life (i.e., John Carroll University, parishes, and apostolates), a model of inclusion is being adopted for the start of the year. The advantages of this model are the prioritization of interactions within the seminary and the wider public life of formation. This will require continued social distancing among the resident seminary community at liturgies, classes, dining rooms, etc.; wearing of masks; frequent handwashing; daily temperature checks; and more frequent sanitization of communal spaces. Certain safety measures will be implemented to allow access to the library for the various groups on campus while upholding CDC guidelines for public spaces. We will have rooms set aside for quarantine if seminarians should become ill and

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rapid-response testing will be available if needed. Also, certain annual events such as lectures have been modified to have limited attendance and online access, while others will be cancelled or postponed pending the outcome of the pandemic. Both the Labor Day Recess and Fall Break have been cancelled in order to allow for the community to establish a safe parameter for interaction by removing shorter recesses that have a potential for a greater spread of the virus. The house retreat, ordinarily held for Borromeo in January, has been moved to the time of Fall Break from October 14 to 18, 2020.

As we finalize our plans with much prayer, conversation, and public health guidance, please know that we will be sharing updates with you in a timely manner. Please look for pertinent emails as we gear up for the fall semester. We are all embracing ministry in a time of crisis. This is our new normal. It demands sacrifices on all our parts. All faculty, staff and students will need to have masks to wear when we are in public venues. We certainly want to engage each other, but that will mean creating intentional barriers to respectively protect one another and not always being able to greet people in the manner we are accustomed. We will need to sanitize our personal spaces in the classrooms, library and dining room in order to keep them germ-free for the next occupant. For the seminarians and lay students, who will still engage in some form of pastoral ministry, a new normal means that we reshape how we interact and mingle with others in order to ensure their safety, maintain our good health, and keep safe the members of the seminary community as we continue to minister as public persons.

I truly believe these temporary starting measures will allow us together to build a creative normal that is inclusive and enables us to embrace Christ's life-giving spirit which is the light that illumines our path in any season of challenge. Please continue to be attentive to your email throughout the summer and especially as we get closer to our fall return date.

We look forward to welcoming you back to Borromeo Seminary this fall.

Sincerely in Christ,



The Reverend Mark A. Latcovich, Ph.D.
President-Rector