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May 25, 2022

Dear Parents, Faculty, Staff, Families, and Friends,

The horrific elementary school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, so soon after the tragedy in Buffalo, was beyond heartbreaking. The fact that we repeatedly find ourselves mourning the loss of lives in schools and communities across our country is maddening on so many levels. But I know that for you — the families, staff, and faculty who are in our schools on a daily basis — this news is more than maddening; it's frightening.

Outside of the home, school should be the safest place for our children. No child should ever have to fear going to school or being in a classroom.

The Catholic School Office, along with the staff and faculty of every school in our Diocese, will continue to do everything in our power — working with local officials and law enforcement — to safeguard our children, families, and staff.

What sometimes seems inconvenient or even overzealous on our part — needing to check students in or out with photo identification, barring our doors to the public, practicing lock-down or lockout drills with our students — are, in reality, the very things that could save precious lives. We ask for your continued patience with these policies that are meant to protect everyone in our schools.

In the wake of the most recent school shooting, we are redoubling our efforts on multiple fronts:

- We will have counselors available for any student, faculty, or staff member who is in need of support.
- We will continue to be in regular contact with local law enforcement to review safety plans and procedures with regard to school and student safety.
- We will enhance and utilize security cameras, single-entry points, and other measures in our schools to control and monitor outsiders who may be present on any campus.

Of course, you are our partner in school safety. **If you hear or see anything troubling, please report it to your school principal or directly to my office.** This extends to your children, as well. No concern is too small, so please do not hesitate to reach out.

Your children, our students, may have tough questions related to the recent news, or they may keep it all inside and worry silently. Every child will process these events differently, but all are impacted. Be aware that this kind of trauma may bring out a change in behavior or demeanor. Again, we ask you to reach out to your school or our office so that we may offer counseling and resources, if needed. We also have online resources for parents on our website:

<https://catapultlearning.com/diocese-of-albany/>

Please join us in praying for those whose lives have been forever altered by recent tragedies and for all schools to be safe havens for children to learn and thrive. Know that we continue to do everything in our power to make our schools such a place, and we will never lose sight of the precious lives in our care. Your children are our children, and we love them and protect them as our very own.

Thank you for your continued support of Catholic education, for your trust, and for your partnership. We are an extended family, and we will get through this as a family.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call or email my office.

God bless you and yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Giovanni Virgiglio, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Giovanni Virgiglio, Jr., Ed.D.
Superintendent of Catholic Schools