



December 11, 2020  
*Optional Memorial of St. Damasus I, Pope*

Dear Students of Mount St. Mary's School of Theology,

I trust that this letter finds you well in this Season of Advent, a period that marks us as a people of hopeful anticipation. Even though the year 2020 has been long and arduous, with many longing for its quick completion, we are not – or, at least, should not be – unaware of the rich blessings that the Lord has bestowed on us in this year of grace and favor. Although the way forward will not come without its fair share of challenges, it will also not come without the assurance that the way that we take will ultimately lead to “the Way,” Christ, our Lord, Who is also “the Truth, and the Life.”

For returning students, this letter serves as a reminder of the health policies and precautions that were taken in the Fall Semester and that will continue to guide our way forward in the Spring Semester. For new students, please be mindful of the following policies and procedures.

### POLICIES

#### **Health Self-Evaluations**

Prior to visiting the seminary campus or the satellite campus at St. John the Baptist Parish, Tipp City, students are asked to perform a health self-evaluation. This evaluation will include looking for the following symptoms as indicated on the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>):

1. Tier 1 Symptoms: **High temperature** (100.3 °F or higher is the cut-off temperature), **cough, respiratory distress** (i.e. difficulty breathing or shortness of breath), and/or **new loss of taste or smell**

NB: IF STUDENTS EXPERIENCE ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS, **THEY ARE ASKED TO NOT COME ON CAMPUS**. Rather, they are to make arrangements with their instructors to receive class materials remotely.

2. Tier 2 Symptoms: **Muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea.**

NB: These are relatively general and common symptoms, yet they are also listed as possible COVID symptoms by the CDC. We ask our students to be very cautious and proactive in not bringing illnesses on campus. IF YOU ARE IN DOUBT AS TO YOUR HEALTH OR WHETHER YOU ARE CONTAGIOUS, PLEASE STAY HOME. IF YOU ARE CONFIDENT THAT YOUR SYMPTOMS HAVE A NON-COVID SOURCE, SUCH AS SEASONAL ALLERGIES, YOU MAY PRUDENTLY CONTINUE WITH YOUR CLASS OR STUDIES, YET WE ASK YOU TO SOCIALLY DISTANCE YOURSELF FROM OTHERS TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY.

#### **Temperature Checks**

External-surface thermometers (either non-contact or forehead-contact thermometers that have been cleansed) may be utilized by institutional administrators or faculty at any time. **If you have a temperature reading of 100.3 °F or higher, you will be kindly asked to return home until your**

**temperature returns to normal.** Temperature checks may be implemented at any time at the institution's discretion.

### **Masks and Social Distancing**

Even though classrooms will be rearranged to allow for social distancing practices, all students will be asked to wear masks while inside the respective building (i.e. seminary or St. John the Baptist, Tipp City), from the moment of entry until the moment of departure. These masks do not need to be medical-grade (N-95) masks, but they should cover the lower half of the nose (including nostrils at all times) down to the base of the chin. Please follow any indications provided by either the institution or the instructor in this regard.

### **Campus Restrictions**

For those students attending the seminary campus, daily liturgies in the Chapel of St. Gregory the Great will be closed to non-resident students, as will the refectory. However, students are permitted to access the library and student bookstore, though observing the mask and social distancing policy as stated above. For those students attending the Tipp City campus, please be mindful of the directives given by instructors and/or facility coordinators regarding areas that might be closed to students.

### **Medical Accommodations**

If you have a medical condition that might make compliance with these policies impractical, or might cause hardship or “false indicators” of a possible illness, please provide a letter from your physician indicating the appropriate accommodation. This letter should be provided to me in advance of the start of classes. Please note: a letter of a past COVID-19 test or the presence of antibodies do not excuse from following these institutional policies.

All of these policies will be periodically evaluated and revised based on the situation at the time.



I am inspired by your desire to further your knowledge of the Lord's will for your lives, and for deepening your knowledge of our Catholic Faith. I am, likewise, grateful for your cooperation with these policies that, though somewhat onerous, provide us with the opportunity to continue to live our lives of communion with God and neighbor.

If there are any questions or points of clarification with regard to the above-mentioned information, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Reverend Ryan T. Ruiz  
*Dean, School of Theology*