



A Letter on Terrorism Preparedness from the Principal

March 27, 2003

Dear Parent/Guardian:

In light of the rapidly evolving events of the Middle East, the government has placed our country on a “Code Orange” alert. This type of alert brings with it a heightened state of awareness, preparedness and planning. Providing you with accurate information is part of this process.

The purpose of this letter is to assure you that adequate preparation is in place at Union Catholic. Our emergency response plan is on file with the Archdiocese, the Scotch Plains Police Department and local office of emergency management. The plan is continually under review and updated accordingly. It covers various types of emergency situations and addresses both evacuation and lockdown procedures. Meetings have and will continue to take place to assure that our students, faculty and staff are familiar with key points of this plan.

Our command center has been activated and we have been in contact with our local and county emergency management personnel. We continue to monitor and assess situations and events, and will activate the school’s emergency response team and elements of the plan as it may become necessary.

Of immediate concern are the government’s potential designation of a “Code Red” alert and the effect it would have on our school and students. “Code Red” will only be called in the case of an imminent attack or the realization of an attack that directly affects schools. The nature of the State and local response will be dictated by the situation. Where a Code Red is implemented, school and local emergency management officials will decide the best course of action to ensure that our students are protected. In an extreme case, this may mean that Union Catholic may keep students at the school for their protection, or it could mean sending students home to be with their families. The decision to lockdown or evacuate cannot be made until such time as the specific nature of a threat is identified and the government’s declaration of a “state of

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emergency”. In any case, we are prepared to respond as situations dictate. Since we have our own cafeteria, we have adequate provisions (food, water and beverage) on site.

If a “Code Red” alert goes into effect and Union Catholic must go to a lockdown mode, certain procedures will take place.

- In a lockdown situation, no one will be permitted to enter or leave the school building.
- We will not release your child to you or anyone else during the lockdown. In the event of a lockdown, **do not come to Union Catholic to pick-up your son or daughter.**
- Government and local emergency management officials will determine the length of the lockdown, not school authorities.
- When government and local emergency management officials give their approval, we will begin to release students in an organized and responsible manner.

We would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation and support. We will use our Union Catholic web page to provide timely information to our students, faculty and staff, and to you the parents. We will continue to evaluate conditions and events and base our decisions accordingly.

As a further source of information, the State of New Jersey has a web site dedicated to Homeland Security. - www.jnhomelandsecurity.com - This website is designed to provide useful advice in preparedness planning for you and your families. This site will post warnings and has the most up-to-date information on threat conditions. It will include information in the event of an emergency. Lastly, this website links to the Office of Emergency Management and other governmental agencies.

In closing, now that our country is at war, let us pray for peace unceasingly, and let us continue to pray for each other and for the men, women and children in all areas who will be the most affected by this war.

Very truly yours,

Sister Percylee Hart
Principal

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