



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT ❖ OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS & CENTERS
Pastoral Center ❖ PO Box 40200 ❖ St. Petersburg, FL, 33743-0200 ❖ PH: 727-347-5539 ❖ Fax: 727-341-6848

August 27, 2021

Dear Catholic School Parents and Guardians,

As you likely know, rates for Covid-19 in all five Diocese of St. Petersburg counties continue at extremely high levels and school-aged children now make up 25 percent of new cases. After just two weeks of school, we have experienced significant disruptions due to student and staff illness and quarantines mandated by the Department of Health. After much thought and prayer, we believe it's necessary to elevate our precautionary measures to ensure the safety of our school communities and effective operation of our schools.

After review and consultation with the Office of Catholic Schools and Centers, Bishop Gregory Parkes has approved the following protocols for Catholic schools in the Diocese of St. Petersburg, effective Monday, August 30:

- Masks or face coverings are required for all employees, visitors, and students age 4 – grade 12 while indoors on campus, regardless of vaccination status and/or previous opt-out choice.
- A medical opt-out form for masks is available at your school. It must be signed by a licensed health care provider and include a description of the medical reason for the exemption.

This policy will be in effect until the weekly new case rate is below 100 per 100,000 population and the positivity rate is below 10% in a given county, as documented by the Florida Department of Health website.

Our main goal continues to be keeping our educational communities safe and keeping our schools open. This action will help decrease virus transmission and reduce the number of students and staff members subject to mandatory quarantines. As soon as community transmission drops below 100 per 100,000 population **and** the positivity rate is below 10%, schools will return to a mask-optional status.

Every family is encouraged to speak to their primary care physician about the benefits and risks of vaccinations and other preventative measures to keep their family and others safe. In addition, parents are asked to err on the side of caution by keeping their children home from school and getting them tested if they are experiencing Covid-like symptoms. In general, symptoms of the Delta variant are the same as the symptoms of other Covid-19 strains: fever, dry cough, shortness of breath, temporary loss of taste or smell, flulike respiratory and digestive problems, muscle aches, and fatigue.

As Catholic communities, we are called to help and support one another through our actions and prayers. We thank you in advance for your support during this most difficult time.

Sincerely in Christ,

Christopher L. Pastura
Superintendent of Catholic Schools and Centers
Diocese of St. Petersburg