



To: *Parents and Guardians*
From: *Louis P. De Angelo, Ed.D.*
Secretary for Catholic Education
Re: *Masks in Schools*
Date: *August 27, 2021*

This memo pertains to Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 students in Maryland.

In our letter dated August 16, 2021, we noted that changing circumstances may require Catholic schools to pivot in the COVID procedures outlined for schools. Our monitoring of the increased number of COVID cases, the decision of the Maryland State Superintendent to require masks in schools, and the information about quarantines from the county health departments have caused us to re-evaluate our decision regarding masks for students and staff in Catholic schools.

As you know, the Maryland State Board of Education approved a rule last evening requiring students and staff to wear masks indoors in public schools. While we are not certain this requirement is a mandate for non-public schools, we believe it has merit at this time when county rates of positivity for COVID stand at the current numbers.

Furthermore, we recognize that if a student or staff member tests positive for COVID in our schools, we shall be required by the county health departments to quarantine the entire class since not all students would be masked. With everyone masked, fewer students would need to quarantine.

Therefore, all students, staff, and visitors in Catholic schools will be required to wear masks indoors as we begin the 2021-2022 school year. While requiring masks was not our initial decision in mid-August, circumstances have changed. We shall revisit this current decision as the school year gets underway.

- PreK-3 and PreK-4 students will follow the same regulations as students in Grades K-12.
- Students engaged indoors in classroom instruction, sports, practices, activities, programs, rehearsals, assemblies, etc. are to be masked. Adults present with students indoors are to be masked.
- Students outdoors for classes, recess, sports, programs, etc., are not required to be masked.

- Spectators at indoor events are to be masked; spectators at outdoor events do not need to mask.
- Masks are required on school busses.
- Masks are to be fitted tightly on the face, especially over the nose, under the chin, and no gaps on the cheeks.

Vaccination remains our primary means to reduce the county rates for COVID positivity. Please encourage family and neighbors to be vaccinated.

Thank you for your cooperation and support. Let us continue to ask Mary, our Mother, to intercede for us for the health and safety of all.