August 18, 2021

Dear Catholic School Families,

On August 6th, the Office of Christian Formation and Schools released the Diocesan Directive for Catholic Schools - 2021-2022 Guidelines for the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Directive was posted on our diocesan website and Catholic School Principals were asked to share this information with parents at their earliest convenience. The Directive was also shared with local news outlets via a press release from the Diocesan Communications Office. The Directive can be found at the following link:


As stated in the Directive, the Diocese of Steubenville has chosen NOT to mandate that unvaccinated students or staff be required to wear masks during school hours and while in doors, even though both the CDC and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) strongly recommend that students and staff who are not fully vaccinated do so. It is our belief that the decision to wear a mask should be an individual decision made by staff and parents of students, after careful reflection of local circumstances and in consultation with one’s health care provider. It is for this reason that parents and staff are asked to sign an acknowledgement of the “No Mask Mandate” policy and other policies spelled out in the Directive.

It is extremely important that parents also be made aware of the ODH Guidelines for Quarantine After Exposure in K-12 Classroom Settings. Those Guidelines along with a colorful “flow chart” for simplification can be found here:


Parents will note that should there be an exposure to Covid-19 within the classroom setting, the quarantine rules differ for vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals, as well as for those staff and students who wear a mask compared to those who don’t. While there is freedom of choice in regards to masks and vaccines, there is not a freedom of consequences in regards to the state’s exposure guidelines. Our goal has always been to keep children in school for in person learning, as we believe that this best supports growth in our students cognitively, emotionally, and developmentally; and the experience of in-person interaction within the school community helps them to grow spiritually as well. For this reason, we are asking parents to carefully consider the state’s quarantining “guidelines” which are in fact more than “guidelines” and will be enforced in our schools by local health departments.

As we recently heard from the Governor of Ohio, the delta variant has been spreading rapidly across Ohio. The CDC regards almost all of the counties in the state as areas of high-risk. Because of the increasing trend for new infections, the current ODH rules for quarantining individuals exposed to Covid-
19 in the classroom setting, and our desire to keep children in schools for in-person learning (as well as uninterrupted extra-curricular activities), we highly recommend and are asking very strongly that students and staff wear a mask while indoors for these first few weeks through September. This is a mitigation strategy and would allow for practical exceptions such as when eating and drinking, or for PE class and indoor recess, as well as medical or developmental reasons (although the ODH quarantine Guidelines will apply regardless of those exceptions/reasons).

It is our hope that once the delta variant spikes and the trend for new infections begins to wane, this temporary request will have proven to be helpful in reducing the spread of infection in our schools. Please know that this a request and not a requirement or mandate. Parents may still choose not to have their child wear a mask while indoors at school, nor shall parents be asked to provide reasons for their decision. Students who are not masked shall not be treated any differently than students who are masking, and the same shall hold true for all staff.

Thank you for your careful consideration on this important matter,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Dcn. Paul D. Ward, Superintendent