



CATHOLIC DIOCESE  
*of*  
**BATON ROUGE**  
Office of the Bishop

26 October 2021

To the Clergy, Catholic School Community, and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Baton Rouge:

These past several months have been difficult for us as a local Church! Aside from the challenges resulting from Hurricane Ida, our community has continued to fight the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020. August 2021 began with a growing surge of infections and new mandates issued by civil authorities, including Governor Edwards, all aimed at protecting public health. To preserve hard-won successes throughout the duration of the pandemic, mask wearing in our churches, schools, and other institutions was once again implemented.

Given declining infection rates not only in the Greater Baton Rouge Area but throughout Louisiana, I am now modifying several of our practices based upon medical advice, wisdom, and recommendations from state leaders.

While I continue to encourage the wearing of masks by and among those who feel vulnerable, masks will no longer be required in places of worship or indoors in parochial facilities. In addition, mask-wearing will be optional in our Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. This change in policy is effective immediately. Further guidelines will be issued by the Catholic Schools Office later this week to aid school principals and other leaders in following CDC guidelines regarding quarantine procedures and continued mitigation of viral spread.

While these changes will come as welcome news to many, I continue to encourage diligence throughout our community since this pandemic has not yet ended. It has been my goal and that of our diocesan leaders to ensure that everyone in our parishes and schools are kept as safe as possible. It has also been my desire that our parishes and schools return to their operations with minimal disruptions. Should our situation change once more, guidelines may once again be revised.

Sacrifice and our hard work have brought us collectively to this moment! I echo the words of St. Paul to the Galatians while reflecting upon these new developments: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

Hope in the Lord,

  
Most Reverend Michael G. Duca  
Bishop of Baton Rouge