



September 1, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians in our Catholic Schools:

We pray this letter finds you and your families well and excited for this new school year! Thank you for your ongoing support, partnership and belief in Catholic education during this challenging time.

As you are aware, our School Reopening Committee worked thoughtfully and prayerfully this summer to develop a health and safety plan. That plan honored the decisions of parents and guardians as the primary educators of their children. However, yesterday, the Pennsylvania Department of Health announced that masks will be required in all K-12 schools, private, parochial and public, for students, faculty and staff when indoors, effective September 7, 2021.

Throughout the pandemic, we have followed every state mandate, and, when developing our safety plan for this school year, stated that we would continue to follow state COVID-19 mandates. We understand there are various positions and feelings regarding masking, but, as we have a mandate that applies to parochial schools, our cooperation is required. As such, ***face masks will be required for all students, faculty, staff, visitors, et al., when indoors in all 36 Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Harrisburg, regardless of vaccination status, effective Tuesday, September 7, 2021.*** Based on the Department of Health's mandate, our masking protocols include:

- A face mask, covering the mouth and nose, must be worn by all students, teachers, staff and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, when inside our Catholic schools.
- Face masks are not required when:
  - Wearing a mask would cause a medical condition or exacerbate an existing one, including respiratory issues, mental health conditions or a disability.
    - In these cases, a face shield is recommended to be worn.
  - Engaging in an activity that cannot be performed while masked, like eating and drinking or playing a musical instrument.
  - Participating in physical education classes and athletic practices or events, whether indoor or outdoor.
  - The individual is under two (2) years of age.

Our Catholic schools will follow CDC guidelines in the event of a COVID exposure. As guidelines are reviewed and updated, we will share these updates.

Let us celebrate the gift of this school year with joy, and, together, find opportunities to bring God's children closer to Christ. May God bless you and your family.

In Christ,

Most Rev. Ronald W. Gainer  
Bishop of Harrisburg

Mr. Daniel Breen  
Secretary for Education  
Superintendent of Catholic Schools