



DIOCESE OF CAMDEN
Office of Catholic Schools

February 10, 2022

Dear Catholic School Families,

On February 7, Governor Murphy announced that the executive order requiring all adults and children inside of New Jersey school buildings to wear a mask at all times will end on March 7, 2022. South Jersey Catholic Schools have observed the requirements of the executive order because they were specifically named in it. In addition, our assumption has been that the governor is advised by the NJ Department of Health and others who have expertise to determine whether or not masks are a necessary precaution at a given time. Monday's announcement signals that the progression of the virus and the level of protection against serious illness from prior infection and vaccination are such that a change in mask requirements is appropriate.

Therefore, I have advised principals of all South Jersey Catholic Schools that masks will be optional beginning March 7, 2022. Parents are strongly encouraged to consider vaccination for their children as protection against serious illness and/or to continue to provide a mask for their children to wear at school. Parents who would like their children to have the extra protection that a mask offers are encouraged to use N95 or KN95 masks, which offer more protection to the mask wearer when not everyone around them is wearing a mask.

We expect that there may be additional changes to health and safety precautions when the NJ Department of Health updates its COVID-19 guidance for schools in light of the governor's announcement. They may include recommendations or requirements for wearing masks under specific circumstances, such as large assemblies or gatherings. We also need to be prepared to adjust again if additional measures, such as requiring masks, are necessary in the future. All schools will remain vigilant in maintaining other COVID-19 health and safety protocols, such as distance between students in classrooms and ensuring proper ventilation. Parents will be informed about expectations for students if and when health and safety guidelines change.

Our priorities continue to be to promote the health and safety of all students, teachers, and school community members and their families and to ensure that students are able to remain in school for in-person learning. Thank you for your perseverance over the last two years in partnering with your school's principal and teachers to achieve those goals. Please continue to pray for those in our communities, across the country, and around the world who continue to suffer from serious effects of COVID-19 and for an end to this pandemic.

Sincerely in Christ,

Dr. William A. Watson
Superintendent of Schools