



February 7, 2022

Diocese of Joliet revision to masking requirements in Catholic schools, religious education programs

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Joliet offer a rigorous curriculum grounded in the tenets of our Catholic faith. Our principals, teachers, staff and volunteers work every day in collaboration with parents to help our students surpass their academic goals while educating them on Catholic social teaching. We are grateful for and humbled by this group effort.

We heard from many stakeholders over the weekend regarding the temporary restraining order issued on Friday by a Sangamon County judge against the governor's executive orders requiring masks in schools and a vaccination-or-test option for all school personnel. None of the Catholic dioceses in Illinois were parties to the lawsuit brought by parents against public school districts across the state, and we opened classes today by continuing to require masks.

We value the partnership among our school personnel, students and parents. We took time to survey our principals on the needs of their school community. After prayerful consideration, we are revising our masking guidance from "mask required" to "mask recommended," effective February 8.

- Parents will be required to sign a "mask use" form indicating whether their child will wear a mask in school. These forms must be turned into schools by Friday, February 11.
- The "mask recommended" guidance also applies to school personnel.
- All other COVID-19 mitigations will remain in place, including weekly testing for school personnel who are not vaccinated, as well as three-foot social distancing.
- Principals are instructed to consult with their pastors on the use of masks during school Mass.
- The "mask recommended" guidance also applies to our youth religious education programs.

It is important to note the Illinois attorney general on Friday filed an emergency motion to stay the temporary restraining order, and today filed a motion to appeal the judge's ruling. We will revise our mask-use guidance as needed as this case progresses through the judicial system.

We are grateful for your patience, and we pray for a peaceful and quick resolution to this issue.