



## Office of Schools

*So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ~Genesis 1:27*

August 9, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians,

May the peace of Christ be with you! At the conclusion of last school year, there was a sense of accomplishment within our school communities after maintaining academic success in safe classroom environments. Our school personnel worked tirelessly to keep students safe and healthy. That hard work resulted in little to no COVID-19 transmission on our campuses despite approximately 600 positively identified cases in our communities.

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Orlando are ready to open and welcome all students back. While standardized test results prove in-class learning is the optimal environment for most students, we will be able to support a virtual option for students with special medical needs who are not receiving state scholarship funding (Florida Department of Education requires in-class learning to receive scholarship funds). Our schools have been undergoing preparations for the new school year, including the installation of UVC lighting within the ventilation systems. UVC lighting is a method of air sanitation that works by disrupting the DNA of the virus, making it impossible to replicate.

Recent reports show the number of new COVID-19 cases continue to rise and the positivity rate currently hovers near 20% in many central Florida counties. Therefore, general protocols for all schools are as follows; however, each case is unique and may fall outside these general parameters:

### Cleaning and Handwashing

- Schools will conduct regular cleaning of high contact surfaces throughout the day. Students will be encouraged to use hand sanitizer and conduct frequent handwashing. Social distancing (3 ft.) will be maintained when possible.

### Mask Requirements

- Masks are strongly recommended. Masks will be optional for students and staff when the county in which your child's school is located falls below 8% (according to Florida Health Department weekly reports).
- When a county is 8% or higher, students are required to wear masks at all times while in class, changing classes, participating in the celebration of Mass, field trips, and other times while in close proximity of each other or the teacher. They may remove masks while outside at recess. During this time, when a school has UVC lighting installed and desks are socially distanced,

school administration may allow students with parent permission the option to lower their masks while seated.

#### Quarantine Procedures

- If a student tests positive for COVID-19, they must remain home for 10 days.
- If a student is within close proximity and exposed to someone positive, they will also be quarantined for 10 days. Quarantine may be shortened to 7 days if a parent submits verification of a negative COVID-19 test (no home tests) for the student taken on day 6 or 7 of the quarantine. With that negative test result, the student may return on day 8.
- Quarantine is not required for a student if the parent can provide verification of previously testing positive for COVID-19 within the past 90 days or if the parent can submit verification that the student has been fully vaccinated for COVID-19 based on CDC criteria.

These general COVID-19 protocols will be monitored and adjusted as needed for the safety of the students, faculty, and staff within our schools. Each of our Catholic schools will have more specific details based on these general protocols due to the uniqueness of each school's design.

Let us enter this school year appreciating that we are all made in God's image and pray that our plans will honor His people and their well-being.

Respectfully in Christ,



Henry Fortier  
Secretary for Education/  
Superintendent of Catholic Schools