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February 11, 2022

Dear Catholic School Families,

Governor Murphy has announced that executive order 208, requiring all adults and children inside of New Jersey school buildings to wear a mask at all times, will end on March 7, 2022. The Diocese of Metuchen's Catholic Schools have observed the requirements of the executive order because they were specifically named in it. In addition, we relied on our own infectious disease experts from St. Peter's hospital whom deemed the wearing of masks to be best practice. 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.

The determination has been made that beginning on March 7, 2022, masks will be optional in the Diocese of Metuchen's Catholic Schools. Parents who would like their children to have the extra protection that a mask could offer 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. 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. Students will be expected to comply with mask mandates in other venues that the school uses, including buses. All parents will be informed about expectations for students if health and safety guidelines change.

During the past two years, our schools have focused on 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 collaborating 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,

Ellen F. Ayoub
Secretary of Education