

# DIOCESE OF SAN BERNARDINO



## OFFICE OF THE VICAR GENERAL

Date: August 16, 2021

TO: Pastors, Administrators, Catholic School Principals, Parish Religious Education Directors

FM: Msgr. Gerard M. Lopez

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'GML'.

RE: **REVISED COVID PROTOCOLS FOR MASSES/LITURGIES/SACRAMENTS  
DUE TO SCHOOL/RELIGIOUS EDUCATION REOPENING**

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We offer thanks to Our Lord Jesus for the beginning of this new school year for our Catholic schools and religious education programs. Let us go forward in hope and joy.

California is gradually making progress in its vaccination effort; as of August 15<sup>th</sup>, 65% of Californians 12 and older have been fully vaccinated. However, since the vast majority of our Diocesan children who attend our parish schools and religious education classes are *under* twelve (12), the risk of the COVID Delta variant among school age children remains critically high. (One out of every five cases in the Inland Empire [Riverside and San Bernardino counties] is among youth 18 years and younger.)

As a Diocese, we want to maximize every opportunity to protect the reopening of our schools and ministries. We are doing so by strongly urging our parish families to wear masks – vaccinated or not; to continue social distancing; and, to continue maintaining frequent sanitizing schedules when reopening schools and catechetical ministries.

To ensure that our priests, Eucharistic ministers, teachers, staff and students are thoroughly protected from this airborne Delta virus, please adhere to the following COVID protocols when celebrating School Masses or conducting any worship/liturgical activity with our youth:

- Masks must be worn by priests, Eucharistic ministers, all teachers, staff and students when celebrating Mass, conducting any liturgical or sacramental activity when inside the church or parish hall.
- Celebrants may remove their masks while at the altar during the Consecration, if a distance of twelve (12) feet is maintained between others within the sanctuary.
- Celebrants, deacons, Eucharistic ministers must wear their masks when distributing Holy Communion.

- Teachers, staff and students may remove their masks when receiving Holy Communion, replacing them immediately thereafter.
- Singing by all (choirs, cantors, students) must be done with masks in place.
- Students may process to present gifts during the Offertory but must wear masks when doing so.
- Students, teachers, staff must wear masks inside any confessional.
- Priests may remove their masks when inside a closed confessional only if they are vaccinated.
- Teachers, students, staff who serve as lectors, readers, and commentators may remove their masks at the ambo, if a distance of twelve (12) feet is maintained from others. Masks must be replaced prior to leaving the ambo.
- Celebrants, Eucharistic ministers, deacons, altar servers should sanitize their hands appropriately during the Mass, but especially before and after the distribution of Holy Communion or the handling of any liturgical items such as the Roman Missal, Lectionary, or liturgical vessels.
- Please direct any questions or concerns to Ann Marie Gallant in the EOC Office.

May Our Lord and Our Blessed Mother watch over our children and youth in these opening days of the new school and religious education year. Thank you for your dedication and joyful service.

