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## DIOCESE OF VENICE IN FLORIDA

### OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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August 30, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians:

As we prepare to reopen our Religious Education programs, let us remain focused on Christ who is the reason for catechesis, the reason we teach, and the reason why we will gather, prudently and safely.


The Diocese of Venice Department of Education has developed a reopening plan to provide guidance to our Directors and Coordinators of Religious Education and catechists as we move into the new academic year 2021-22. The plan is built on our conviction that students deserve access to in-person learning and is guided by recent experience and greater understanding of COVID-19. Increased vaccination rates, successful mitigation strategies to limit the spread of the virus, as well as local data and national research, contribute to the formulation of this plan.


The goal is to provide a safe environment with appropriate protocols needed to ensure healthy, in-person learning with masks as optional. Considering the prevalence of the Delta variant, and within the framework of optionality, the Department of Education will monitor the COVID positivity rate by county using data provided by the Florida Department of Health. Optionality will be adjusted, and masks will be required, temporarily, indoors in parish religious education programs in a county with a positivity rate of 10% or greater. When the positivity rate falls below 10%, masks will continue to be optional. The decision about masks will be made using the most current data in each county and communicated by the Diocesan Department of Education.

Some of the effective safety practices that were established in the past will be retained as we strive to provide as normal a school year as possible. The plan may be updated based on the guidance of local and state public health officials. The parish religious education website will serve as the primary source for updated information to parents and guardians, as well as other social media platforms.

Please join me in prayer for the continued wellbeing of all students, as well as our Pastors, Directors and Coordinators of Religious Education and Catechists. During this Year of St. Joseph, let us continue to turn to him in prayer that he might intercede for our children that they may be safe.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

  
+ Frank J. Dewane  
Bishop of the Diocese of  
Venice in Florida

  
Rev. John Belmonte, S.J.  
Superintendent of  
Catholic Education

FJD/nml