



October 15, 2021

Dear Parents and Students,

It is with great joy that I report a precipitous drop in COVID-19 cases over the past month in our area. Our diocesan schools in Shelby County reported the following student positive cases over the past four weeks: 22, 14, 6, and 1. This decline in cases is due to the tremendous efforts of all the teachers and staff of our schools as well as the cooperation of our students and parents. I am so grateful to all of you. Have we turned the corner? Well, it appears so, but I must ask you to remain patient as we will continue to require masking through Friday, October 29.

The reasoning for the ongoing need for masks is that the Shelby County Health Department currently requires masking indoors through October 29. **Once the health department releases a new health directive, we will update our policy as well.** I want to commend the local Health Department for being transparent, informational, and, most importantly, willing to listen to the residents of the county and keep them safe. I know some of you may be upset that the masking requirements will continue, but we must abide by the local health department guidelines. And the masking along with vaccinations and our other mitigations are working very well to quash this virus once and for all. Listen, this pandemic has been nothing short of awful. Thousands of lives have been lost, rising inflation, loss of jobs, etc. are all taking a serious toll on everyone. But one day we will look back and hopefully say we learned from this tragedy, we were stronger for it, and we will not forget the sacrifices that were made.

I will leave you with this short story that illustrates what our Catholic schools are all about and why we need to focus on the larger picture. Last week I visited Immaculate Conception Cathedral School where they were hosting a volleyball game versus St. Paul. It was an eighth-grade night for the girls and normally eighth graders on the home team are recognized along with their parents for their dedication to their sport and school. Prior to the game, the ICCS eighth-grade girls were introduced, and each of them was given a bouquet of flowers. But what made the night even more special was each of those eighth graders then presented a single flower to the eighth-grade girls from St. Paul who were also applauded by the crowd for their dedication and effort. Our Catholic faith in action. Congrats to both the Wildcats and the Panthers!

Trust that God is here for us now and will always be at our side. Trust that the leaders of our Diocese, just like the Health Department, are doing their best to keep your children, our teachers, and staff as safe as possible. And thank you for your continued support of our Catholic schools. Have a great weekend and God Bless all of you.

Mr. Pierre N. Antoine

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Superintendent of Catholic Schools
Diocese of Memphis, Tennessee

Cc: Most Reverend Bishop David P. Talley, M.S.W., J.C.D.
Very Reverend Keith Stewart, Vicar General
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