



CATHOLIC DIOCESE
of
BATON ROUGE
Office of the Bishop

04 August 2021

To the Faithful of the Diocese of Baton Rouge:

The increase in COVID infection numbers due to the Delta variant has become quite alarming here in Louisiana. As you heard at Governor Edwards' press conference earlier this week, a new mask mandate has been imposed in our state for all indoor gatherings. This includes gatherings in Churches and in other facilities operated by our parishes and apostolates. Because of this new mandate and knowing of the changing circumstances because of the new COVID variant, I recently issued several guidelines to priests and deacons to assist them in their ministry.

Specifically, masks are expected to be worn by everyone attending any indoor Church event including Mass, whether on Sunday or Weekdays, at all parish gatherings held indoors in a church facility, and at all communal celebrations of the Sacraments.

It is also important to note that because of this surge, some people will feel uncomfortable attending Mass. Clergy in the Diocese of Baton Rouge already possess the faculty to dispense the faithful of the obligation to attend Sunday Mass in individual cases. Currently, I do not plan to impart a collective dispensation for the faithful for now.

We all understand the principles for reducing the spread of the virus, so please act to avoid mass spread of it. As circumstances change in the future, we will also change our practices based upon medical advice, common sense, and wisdom.

We begin another month, tired and weary due to this pandemic, but our eyes are fixed on a future filled with hope knowing that our courageous actions now will again yield much success in days to come!

Hope in the Lord,

Most Reverend Michael G. Duca
Bishop of Baton Rouge