

Dear friends,

The recent surge of the delta variant of the COVID-19 coronavirus is showing its effects throughout the twenty-three counties of the diocese. I don't need to recite these effects as they are well reported. The good news is that we have learned how to live with this virus and mitigate its effects. As always, I join with the Holy Father in urging all those who are eligible for the vaccine to consult with their physician to consider getting the vaccine. I also urge anyone not feeling well, even if they are not sure if they actually have the coronavirus, please to stay home until you can be certain that you do not have it. I remind you that while there is no longer a dispensation from the Sunday obligation, anyone not feeling well or concerned about their own health or that of other family or household members is already exempt from that obligation.

I understand that there are strong feelings, even convictions, about the different protocols for mitigating the virus and frustration about the changing guidance. These feelings often put individuals at odds with one another. Last year Churches were included in a statewide mandate regarding masks. That is not the case this year. What I ask at this point is that we exercise prudence and charity in these weeks in which we are dealing with this surge. In that spirit I am asking that we wear masks at Mass and at indoor parish activities for the time being, continue to practice good measures of hygiene such as the use of hand sanitizers, and that we exercise extra patience with one another during this tense time. The Office of Catholic Schools will continue to work with particular schools to meet the differing needs and regulations in the various communities. The people of this diocese overwhelmingly have been extraordinary in showing that charity and patience – I am proud to be associated with you and deeply grateful for your goodness.

In the meantime, let's pray for all those suffering with illness of any kind, for those who have died, their families, caretakers and all those who serve in healthcare.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Bishop Brennan