

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ :

Yesterday afternoon, the province's Minister of Health, Ms. Shephard, met with religious leaders in the province following the announcement of new measures regarding the pandemic. While explaining what the new guidelines were, she indicated that they had only one goal: to increase the rate of people fully vaccinated in the province (two doses).

Vaccination remains the best way to counter the spread of the Delta virus and protect the population (especially the unvaccinated). The government is looking for a vaccination rate of around 90%. The minister made it clear to us that she does not require masks, sanitizing, or social distancing at our gatherings. These measures are always at the discretion of individuals.

Instead, her wish is to have gatherings of fully vaccinated people to keep people safe and to act as an incentive for the unvaccinated. That is why going back to past health measures (mask, sanitizing, and social distancing) as a way to include unvaccinated people at our gatherings is not the measure promoted by the government.

Therefore, beginning next Wednesday at any gathering inside our churches, rectories or community centres under our supervision, those present will have to be doubly vaccinated.

1. By gatherings we mean: religious celebrations (Sunday and weekly masses, prayer meetings, baptisms, weddings and funerals, Confirmation, First Reconciliation, First Communion), parish and pastoral meetings, catechesis meetings, management meetings, conferences, workshops, fraternal and social meetings, bingos, card games, etc.
2. By those present we mean: priests, lay ministers, members of choirs, volunteers, the faithful and other participants. This also applies to family members or close friends at baptisms, weddings, or funerals. Young people under the age of 12 are naturally exempted by this measure, as they cannot currently be vaccinated.

How can these measures be put in place?

1. Starting this weekend at Sunday Masses and during meetings with families for a baptism, wedding, or funeral, inform the faithful of this new government measure that we will have to apply next Wednesday.
2. At Sunday Masses next week, several volunteers are expected to be at the doors of each church to ask worshippers for full proof of vaccination and put

their names on a list as fully vaccinated people. This list will be used again on subsequent Sundays so our volunteers will avoid asking our parishioners for proof of vaccination each time. The request for proof of vaccination would then be required only for new people. This list may eventually be requested by the government.

3. Inform the funeral home staff that family members and loved ones who come to church are to be doubly vaccinated. For baptisms and weddings, this task will fall to the parish office staff or to the person meeting the family to prepare for the celebration. As with other masses and celebrations, it will be necessary to keep a list of participants in funerals, weddings and baptisms after ensuring that they are doubly vaccinated.
4. For catechesis with children, you follow the rules in force in schools. For the safety of young people, catechists should be fully vaccinated. When parents (or another adult) attend the meetings, they will of course have to be doubly vaccinated. For a celebration in church, you will follow the rule in force now in our churches.
5. As for parish employees, it is highly desirable that they be fully vaccinated. However, if this is not the case, they will have to wear a mask at all times and undergo a COVID test periodically according to government policy.
6. We will accept anyone who comes to the parish offices to get information or service. If this person is not vaccinated, they may be asked to wear a mask.

Can we still accept a person who is not vaccinated or has a single dose inside our facilities for a celebration or a meeting? Even with a mask and social distancing? The minister said "no" unless she had proof of exemption, which is rare.

We ask you to implement these new measures in each of your Christian communities not only to respect the government's request but above all to help stop the spread of the virus among our population. We would not want one of our places of worship to be the location of a COVID exposure due to our negligence. The Minister of Health is counting on our cooperation.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us so that we can help you implement these new measures. I thank you in advance for all the efforts it requires to put in place this new protocol.