

ARCHDIOCESAN COVID-19 SUBCOMMITTEE

Fathers/ Monsignors:

The Archdiocesan COVID-19 Sub-committee met to consider the recent public advisory update of November 12, 2021, which gives parishes another option and offers the possibility of larger attendance at Masses. Since churches vary in physical space and structure, we encourage all Pastors and Administrators to meet with their parish leadership to decide **if and how** you wish to implement this new advisory in your parish for regular Masses, as well as for weddings and funerals.

The update states that our churches can move to **having full capacity if we ask for proof of vaccination** (i.e. by providing documentation from another province or country or by using the NLVaxPass for people 12 years of age and older).

Summary of Updated Public Health Guidance Issued Friday, November 12th, 2021

Indoor and outdoor gatherings operated by a recognized business or organization (e.g., weddings, funerals, faith-based gatherings, etc.), and recreational and arts facilities may operate at **full spectator capacity, without physical distancing** between seated spectators/attendees, provided the following measures are in place:

- Proof of vaccination and proof of identity is provided by all attendees aged 12 years or older;
- Spectators/attendees must wear non-medical masks at all times;
- Eating and drinking is not permitted at the gathering or venue;
- The gathering organizers or the venue owners/operators have a method of contacting attendees quickly via email or text, and contact information is kept for at least 14 days;
- Physical distancing of 2 meters may be maintained between spectators/attendees in common areas, including line-ups at ticket counters and washrooms.

In addition, from the authorities:

Congregational singing and choirs are permitted while wearing masks.

Please note: Common use items such as books and hymnals may be used if set aside for at least 24 hours between uses. However, projecting materials or distribution of single-use materials should be considered. Discard these printed materials after the Mass is complete.

We would suggest that a parish, deanery, or geographical area consider the spiritual needs of those who have yet to receive the vaccine. Some possibilities include:

- In a parish which may have more than one Mass, a specific Mass could be designated for all to attend (i.e., those vaccinated and those not).
 - In a deanery, or in a cluster of parishes, a weekend Mass could be designated for all to attend (i.e., those vaccinated and those not).
- Please note:** These designated Masses would follow the former protocols of physical distancing, restricted numbers, mask wearing, etc.

In St. John's, for example, the Basilica will designate the 9AM Mass on Sunday open to all and will accommodate those who have not yet received the vaccine. We will inform you of other such Masses.

We also recommend:

- that regular weekday Masses, which are small in attendance, be open to all following the former restrictions of physical distancing, restricted numbers, wearing of masks, contact tracing.
- that if you are implementing these new guidelines, you do so for the First Sunday of Advent, which gives a week to properly communicate your plan to your parishioners.
- meeting soon with your volunteers to plan for any changes you want to make and to determine how to organize the anticipated larger Christmas crowds. Keep in mind contact tracing is mandatory even in this new update from the health authorities.

Please note: For Parish Halls, the health authorities have mandated that either the **VaxPass or proof of vaccination is required** for all events like Bingos, card games, parties, catering, etc.

We have tried to anticipate as many questions about this update as we can. We trust that this has been helpful for you. Any further questions you may have, please do not hesitate to contact us and we will try and assist you in any way we can.