

MEMO: To parish priests, deacons and staff

Date: 2021-09-24

UPDATED Requirements – Latest Health Procedures

Today, September 24th, 2021, the provincial government announced that, due to the number of hospitalisations linked to Covid-19, the state of emergency will be reinstated as of 11:59 pm tonight. We have received new directives from the Minister of Health concerning the sanitary measures to be implemented in our churches. Accordingly, the four bishops of NB agree on the following steps to make our churches as safe as possible for our faithful.

POINT 1. No proof of vaccination required for Sunday or weekday masses, baptisms, prayer groups, and all other religious celebrations.

The following measures will apply:

- Masks will be mandatory at all times.
- Seating capacity of our churches will be limited to 50% or less.
- Two meters of physical distancing will be maintained between households (bubbles).
- Singing by the congregation will not be permitted. However, soloists and choirs will be allowed to sing by maintaining a distance of four meters from the assembly.
- The names and contact information of everyone in attendance will have be recorded, and the lists must be kept at the parish office.
- Any person displaying COVID-19 symptoms or who has been instructed to self-isolate will not be permitted to enter the church.

EXCEPTION – For confirmations to be held this fall (for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 confirmation candidates)

We will follow the measures specified in “**POINT 2**” for these celebrations.

- If there are confirmation candidates whose family members are not fully vaccinated, another confirmation ceremony may be planned for them following the measures specified in “**POINT 1**”. If this option is required, we ask that the names and contact information of these candidates be noted and sent to the Diocese.

POINT 2. Proof of vaccination required for weddings, funerals and all other non-religious gatherings and activities.

To attend certain events, such as **weddings, funerals, conferences and workshops, bingos and other parish activities** the following measures will apply:

- Masks will be mandatory at all times.
- Everyone attending will need to show proof of being fully vaccinated.
- For **weddings, funerals and this fall's confirmations**, physical distancing will not be required, which will allow our churches to function at full capacity.
- There will be no need to maintain a list of people in attendance; to be admitted, a person will have to show proof of being fully vaccinated.

POINT 3. For 2021-2022 catechesis classes

As required since the beginning of the pandemic, our catechesis classes will follow the measures established by the provincial school system.

This means that the following measures will have to be followed:

- Masks will be mandatory at all times.
- Access to the catechesis classes will be permitted for volunteers only.
- Parents will not be permitted into the catechesis classes.
- All catechesis volunteers (teachers, assistants, monitors and coordinators) will have to show proof of full vaccination.
- A distance of two meters will have to be maintained between "class bubbles".

These measures will have to be put in place as of 11:59 pm tonight. We understand that it may be difficult to put everything in place for this weekend's celebrations. I trust that the government will understand that we will do everything possible to respect the requirements put in place. Some clarification concerning sanitary measures for employees and volunteers will be provided at a later date.

It must be noted that the situation in our province is evolving and that these measures are subject to change as the circumstances change.

We understand the concerns of Public Health and continue to work together by following the prescribed guidelines to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. We are all concerned by the current situation in our province.

I am very grateful to all the parish priests, the employees and the teams of volunteers who are doing everything possible to ensure the health and safety of our faithful.

May the Lord bless you and continue to watch over you!

+ Daniel Jodoin
Bishop of Bathurst