



DIOCESE of
PARRAMATTA

**Vicar General & Moderator of the Curia
Diocese of Parramatta**

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5 October 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Re: COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Update

The NSW Government has recently published its pathway out of the pandemic and lockdowns, with the “roadmap” to easing various restrictions at the 70% and 80% double dose target for those who are vaccinated. There is a further lifting of restrictions to all citizens of NSW regardless of vaccination status from 1 December 2021.

It is envisaged that NSW will achieve its double dose vaccination target of 70% sometime this week and from next Monday 11 October, restrictions will start lifting for places of worship. Although we would be entitled to open our churches for public Masses from this date, we have decided that we will instead wait the estimated two further weeks until we reach the 80% target before conducting public Masses.

In consideration of the roadmap and its implications to the faithful of the Diocese of Parramatta, a staged process should be applied towards full reopening.

Stage 1: When 70% of the double dose vaccination target is achieved by the state

The full details of the 70% roadmap can be found here: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/easing-covid-19-restrictions/70-percent>.

Our churches can be reopened for private prayer and devotion **only**. Parishes and parishioners will need to be mindful of the NSW Government requirements for this stage of the roadmap.

- There will be no public or “private” Masses with a congregation taking place until the second stage when NSW hits the 80% vaccination target.
- Religious Services:
 - Weddings and Funerals:
 - Up to 50 fully vaccinated guests can attend weddings and funerals;
 - Weddings - those who are unvaccinated may only attend a wedding with a maximum of five people; and
 - Funerals - those who are unvaccinated may only attend a funeral with a maximum of 10 people.
 - Baptisms should be delayed until Stage 2.
 - Confessions should not be publicly scheduled but can be arranged personally with the parish subject to the rules as set out at this stage of the roadmap of the NSW Government.
- COVID Safe practices for indoor venues including wearing masks, maintaining physical distancing and hygiene requirements and record keeping/sign in using QR Codes et cetera should continue to occur.

Stage 2: When 80% of the double dose vaccination target is achieved by the state

The full details of the 80% roadmap can be found here: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/easing-covid-19-restrictions/80-percent>.

At this stage of the roadmap, our churches are to open to our entire community. There is no requirement from the Government to check the vaccination status of people attending our churches.

- Religious Services:
 - All religious services held at a place of worship (including weddings and funerals) will only be limited by the 4 square metre rule.
 - Baptisms and confessions can be publicly scheduled again.
 - Music is an important part of our liturgy. Although congregational singing is not permitted, a single cantor and musician are possible (as per previous Public Health Orders).
 - COVID Safe practices for indoor venues as per Stage 1 above should continue to apply. In addition, the following should also be observed:
 - Avoid handling and passing of objects, for example the collection plate and Mass books.
 - Communion of the Precious Blood will be for the celebrant only.
 - The faithful can be invited to share the Greeting of Peace through a bow of their heads.
 - All ministers of Holy Communion are to use hand sanitisers before the distribution of Holy Communion commences. Those who wish to receive Communion on the tongue should be asked receive Communion at the end and the priest should endeavor to sanitise his hands after each of these communicants.
 - Allow for ventilation in the Church by opening doors and windows where possible.
- Live streaming of Masses should continue, where possible, to allow for people who are especially vulnerable or who are vaccinated but remain anxious at this point, to continue to attend Mass online.

Our parish office and other facilities (meeting rooms) will continue to be subjected to people's vaccination status at this stage. Due to this, it may be prudent for parishes to continue to delay face-to-face meetings, and gatherings until the next stage of the reopening.

Stage 3: From 1 December 2021

- Density limits will move to one person per 2 square metres for both indoor and outdoor settings.
- Congregational singing can resume at our liturgies and services.
- Mask wearing will be encouraged but will no longer be mandatory for places of worship.

At this point, the reopening, regardless of vaccination status, applies to all citizens of NSW for all indoor and outdoor venues. This means that parish officers and other parish facilities can reopen to all. The 2 square metre per person rule will, however, continue to apply.

Yours in Christ,



Very Rev Peter G. Williams
Vicar General & Moderator of the Curia