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Pastoral letter to all clergy in the Diocese of Parramatta on the reopening of churches for public worship

Dear brothers,

As you are all aware the result of the vaccination programme across the State is going lead to a lessening of restrictions in a phased manner between 11 October and 1 December. The NSW Government have indicated that when 70% of the population has received their full vaccination that places of worship can reopen, but only for those who are fully vaccinated.

Discussion amongst the Bishops in the Province and more broadly across the country has led me to the conclusion that it would be counterproductive to reopen our places of worship only to the vaccinated. Whilst Pope Francis and other Church leaders have stressed the importance of being vaccinated for the common good of all, the Church also respects those who choose not to be vaccinated.

Therefore, I have determined that we should wait until the 80% threshold has been achieved before we reopen our Churches as this would then permit all Catholics to attend regardless of vaccination status. The projection is that this is likely sometime towards the end of October. The People of God have along with the rest of the community been deprived of many of the liberties and ability to participate in a range of activities that give meaning and purpose to their lives. It is to the core of our ministry that we resume our pastoral care of the people as soon as that is practicable.

Admission to both hospitals and aged care facilities to minister pastorally to patients and residents will require that clergy are vaccinated. As this ministry is at the heart of the Gospel, I would encourage all clergy if they have not already been vaccinated to arrange to do so as soon as possible.

Once a date has been finalised by the NSW Government as to when 80% fully vaccinated has been achieved an advice to reopen will come from the Chancery.

With my prayers for you and the communities you serve,

**Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv
Bishop of Parramatta**

*Given at Parramatta on 29 September 2021
The Feast of Sts Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Archangels*