



6 October 2021

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

According to the NSW roadmap for the whole of state re-opening, during the fortnight from Monday 11 October until Monday 25 October only the fully vaccinated are permitted to enter churches. (*Monday 11 October is the Monday after 70% of the eligible population is fully vaccinated and Monday 25 October is the Monday after 80% will be completely vaccinated.*)

I direct that the Diocese, the Parishes and the clergy in the diocese follow the NSW government public health orders.

After receiving advice, I have decided that it is too onerous to ask parishes to monitor and implement compliance in respect to vaccination status. Also, the Church, the sacrament of communion, should not be separating people as they come to Mass. Further, excluding some Catholics from worship has the potential to cause long lasting upset and division. Thus, given the brief duration of this regulation, I have taken the grave and sad decision to direct that in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga there will be no public or 'private' Masses with a congregation taking place and that our churches will close between Monday 11 October and Sunday 24 October inclusive.

For similar reasons, our chapels of adoration will also close.

Our churches can be opened for funerals and weddings and these will follow the Public Health Orders.

From Monday 25 October, our Churches are again open to our entire community and regular Masses and other services will resume.

As a way of celebrating our unity in Christ, on Sunday 17 October and again on Sunday 24 October, in the diocese there will be one live-streamed Mass from the Cathedral at 9am on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/vFxmX1ui16A>

I invite you to join me for these Masses. This is an opportunity to celebrate our union as the pilgrim people who have their eyes fixed on the Lord. We will be explicitly the one body of Christ and remain united in this time of tension. This is an opportunity. Let us pray these Masses as the one Church of the Diocese of Wagga Wagga.

I encourage those who are hesitant about receiving a vaccine to see their family doctor to discuss receiving it. Your doctor will give advice that is appropriate for you.

Your priests and I will be offering Mass for you during this time.

In Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate

Most Rev Mark Edwards OMI, Bishop of Wagga Wagga

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