



DIOCESE OF SAINT JOHN

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Office of the Bishop

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On September 15, the provincial government announced that beginning Tuesday, September 21, at 11:59 pm, individuals will be required to show proof of vaccination when accessing certain events, services and businesses, and indoor organized gatherings (including weddings and funerals). At this time the Diocese of Saint John is working closely with public health to implement policies at the parish level that will ensure that all faithful can continue to worship Jesus and receive the Sacraments in full safety and care for one another and the common good.

Vaccination is proving to be the best way to reduce the spread of Covid-19 and its variants, which are on the rise and threaten to overwhelm the hospital system, seriously impacting the level of care medical professionals can provide to the ill and the vulnerable in our province. The Vatican Covid-19 Commission in collaboration with the Pontifical Academy for life stated in its document *Vaccine for all, 20 Points for a Fairer and Healthier World*, “we consider it important that a responsible decision be taken in this regard, since refusal of the vaccine may also constitute a risk to others.”

I encourage you in charity to be vaccinated against Covid-19 if you have not already done so. You will note that Covid-19 vaccines have now received full approval from Health Canada and have been renamed as Comirnaty (Pfizer), Spikevax (Moderna) and Vaxzevria (AstraZeneca). As the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith shared in its note on the morality of using some anti-COVID-19 vaccines (December 21, 2020), “all vaccinations recognized as clinically safe and effective can be used in good conscience with the certain knowledge that the use of such vaccines does not constitute a formal cooperation with the abortion from which the cells used in production of the vaccines derived.”

We also recognize that the decision to vaccinate must never be coerced, and that some individuals, for matters of health or conscience, may choose not to receive the vaccine. While noting that “practical reason makes evident that vaccination is not, as a rule, a moral obligation and that therefore, it must be voluntary,” the CDF states that, “those who, however, for reasons of conscience, refuse vaccines produced with cell lines from aborted fetuses, must do their utmost to avoid, by other prophylactic means and appropriate, behaviour, becoming vehicles for the transmission of the infectious agent.” In such cases refusal to receive the vaccine is also a decision to use other means to protect his or her life and the lives of others against Covid-19. A person claiming religious or ethical exemption should be prepared to properly assume other scientifically recommended means of avoiding infection and contagion: face-coverings, social distancing, hand sanitizing, periodic testing, and quarantine.

Vaccination remains the surest way to limit the spread of Covid-19. I once again urge each person to prayerfully consider vaccination, and to discern a decision that that will best protect themselves, their loved ones, and the common good. As we work to ensure the safety of the faithful, let us remain ever conscious of our mission to spread the joy of the Gospel throughout our diocese and face these new challenges with our gaze fixed firmly on Jesus, who walks with us and never abandons us.

In his mercy I remain, faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christian Riesbeck". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC
Bishop of Saint John

September 17, 2021