



DIOCESE OF
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

When I issued the COVID-19 Vaccination Policy for the Diocese, it was based on the best science and advice that getting as many people vaccinated as possible was the best way to fight the pandemic. In addition, it was intended that our diocesan churches, offices and related institutions would have the safest environments we could provide, caring for our employees and clergy, and caring for the vulnerable among us whom we serve.

For many, the policy provided some comfort that our churches, offices and related institutions were safe for them to enter, though the policy itself recognized that vaccination alone was no guarantee for preventing the spread of the virus. It was a good tool for the fight, nonetheless. For some, however, the policy was a hardship as it meant that some priests, deacons, employees and volunteers could no longer carry out their ministry or work because they could not provide proof of vaccination. For others, the policy exacerbated the divisions felt in our society and even in families. I recognize those difficulties but I am convinced even now, just as I was then, that it was the right thing to do. While we need to respect everyone's position on this divisive topic, we need to move forward with compassion and respect for all our parishioners, employees and clergy.

It was clear that the policy was intended to be temporary and would be ended as soon as reasonably possible. That time has come. By virtue of this letter, **I abrogate the COVID-19 Vaccination Policy for the Diocese of London effective 31 March 2022, with caveats as found below.**

Those volunteers, employees, deacons and priests who were affected by the policy may now consider seeking to return to their former ministry or work. Each situation will be considered on a case-by-case basis. There are some conditions that will apply in such considerations. First, those whose role description for ministry or work still requires that they be vaccinated for any part of that ministry or work will necessarily have to produce proof of vaccination. This would be the case, for instance, where ministry would take someone to a long-term care facility or a hospital or some other institution, any of which might have a vaccination policy for admission. It would not be reasonable to expect people who cannot provide proof of vaccination to be able to return to a position if their ministry or work had such a requirement. These situations need to be carefully monitored for this type of requirement, and the return accordingly.

Second, it is possible that the position vacated by a person who was unable to produce proof of vaccination has already been filled by another. This was anticipated in the Vaccination Policy, and means that the person may not return to that same position.

Third, other changes have been made in staffing, reflecting an evolution in the development in some of the Families of Parishes. It is possible that some positions that existed pre-pandemic are no longer available.

Fourth, to ensure that we fulfill our obligations for fairness and where the *Employment Standards Act of Ontario, 2000* is applicable, all considerations for returning to work or ministry must be cleared through the Director of Human Resources along with the directors for Priests, Deacons and Lay Ecclesial Ministers.

Finally, it must be noted that the coronavirus is still a menace throughout the world. Local health authorities anticipate a rise in the number of cases since all the mandated precautions are being lifted. It is possible that the Government or local Medical Officers of Health may choose to reimpose such restrictions which, in turn, might also lead to reimposing the Vaccination Policy. It is to be hoped that this will not have to happen, but I reserve the right to do so, when and if circumstances change, and I am advised accordingly.

Let us continue to be vigilant as long as the pandemic lasts. I still encourage all who can be vaccinated to get vaccinated. I encourage you to wear masks in public places. I ask that you continue offering prayers for the pandemic to end and for those afflicted by it. May our Blessed Mother continue to intercede for all of us.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Ronald P. Fabbro, CSB
Bishop of London