



1 October 2021

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

The NSW government has outlined the road out of COVID restrictions.

The first change occurs on the Monday after 70% of the eligible population are vaccinated which will almost certainly be Monday 11 October. From this date churches will be allowed to open to the fully vaccinated only.

From the Monday after 80% of the eligible population are fully vaccinated, most likely Monday 25th October, churches and ceremonies can be open to “mixed” congregations, that is, fully vaccinated, partially vaccinated and as yet unvaccinated.

In the third stage, from 1 December, there will be no difference in the Covid safety requirements for fully vaccinated, partially vaccinated or unvaccinated people.

Those Churches currently in lockdown will go from no possibility of Mass (now) to the possibility of Mass with vaccinated people only (from Oct 11) to all people being able to come to Mass (from Oct 25). I am told that the dioceses currently in lockdown are going to wait until 25 October to open up so that the whole body of Christ can resume coming to Church at the same time. They do not want to cause division or resentment between Catholics.

Let us gratefully acknowledge the energetic, constant and successful engagement with and lobbying of government by Archbishop Fisher and his allies which has resulted in the Churches being treated as an essential service.

In regional areas such as Wagga where everyone can freely come to Mass now, the change on October 11 will be experienced as a step backwards for two weeks. And this step may be experienced as hurtful or even divisive by many people.

I am seeking to meet with our local representatives to see if there is a solution that does not involve us going backwards on October 11. Please pray for me in this endeavour and as I search for the best actions to take for us all in the difficult fortnight from October 11 to October 25.

I will write to you again next weekend with what we will do in this time.

In Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate

Most Rev Mark Edwards OMI, Bishop of Wagga Wagga

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