



24 September 2021

Dear Fathers and Faithful of the Archdiocese

The number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported each day in Alberta has increased sharply, and we hear of the consequences of this for our health system and the dedicated doctors, nurses and other staff who are working very hard to accommodate every citizen's health needs. At the same time, I and some of our priests are receiving requests from parishioners for letters of exemption from mandatory vaccination due to their conscience objection.

While the Church respects the freedom of a person's individual conscience – a firm teaching of the Church – the Church's ministers cannot objectively attest to or endorse anyone's personal process of discernment in coming to their decision of conscience. Therefore, the Archdiocese and its parishes will not be issuing letters of exemption from vaccination.

You will recall that on December 2, 2020, the Alberta and NWT Bishops wrote a letter to the faithful in our dioceses providing the moral reasoning that holds it acceptable to use the available vaccines in the context of a global pandemic. This letter is still available at https://archgm.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2020_11_30_Letter-to-the-faithful-on-Vaccines.pdf

Where vaccination is mandated, there should also be provisions that respect and accommodate the dignity of the individual in making a decision of conscientious objection. At the same time, those who choose not to be vaccinated for whatever reason must take all possible precautionary measures to avoid places and circumstances that would compromise their health or that of others. This is everyone's moral responsibility, even those who have been vaccinated.

I am very aware of many statements and forces at play in our society; many of these are contradictory and confusing, leading to deep polarization in families, workplaces and other relationships. In all such circumstances, I ask that we all turn to the Lord in humble prayer, asking Him and the heavenly host to lead and guide us to a place of goodwill and peace.

I keep all of you in my prayers. I ask the same from you.

Sincerely in Christ the Redeemer,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "+ Gerard Pettipas, C.Ss.R.". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. Gerard Pettipas, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan