



DIOCESE *of* GAYLORD

Regarding Vaccines and Pastoral Care

May 18, 2021

Dear Brothers in Christ:

Thank you for your patience as we navigate the changing protocols in place during the time of this pandemic. Revised and updated protocols were emailed to you a short time ago.

As leaders in the Church, we have a responsibility to provide leadership and example for our people. I am grateful for all that has been done. As you know, the recent change in protocols applies to those who have been fully vaccinated. It has become clear that the vaccines are helping to stop the spread of the virus and provide protection for ourselves, as well as those with whom we come in contact. In addition, our Holy Father has encouraged us all to receive the vaccine, expressing it as a concern for others.

I have been fully vaccinated and most of our priests have as well. Others have chosen not to be vaccinated. This decision not to be vaccinated has created a pastoral problem in parishes in which unvaccinated priests are prohibited from visiting hospitals and nursing homes (due to hospital and nursing home regulations).

The result is leaving parishioners without the sacraments or requiring that people find a priest, if they are able to do so, that has been vaccinated and willing to come. **Our personal decisions impact others.** Priests who have chosen to remain unvaccinated should advise their people that they are unvaccinated and cannot visit the sick in hospitals and nursing homes. They should also inform people that it will be necessary to find another priest if they wish sacraments to be available for their sick relatives in these situations.

As a part of our revised protocols, it should be noted that unvaccinated priests (and Eucharistic Ministers) are expected to wear masks during the distribution of Holy Communion as has been required in our earlier protocols. Those who have not been fully vaccinated are also expected to wear a mask as before, i.e. during the entrance procession, recessional and during the distribution of Holy Communion. Those who have been fully vaccinated do not need to wear a mask.

We owe it to our people to provide full and complete pastoral care and to do so in a safe manner.

With gratitude for your faithful ministry,

Fraternally yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley
Apostolic Administrator