

**COMMUNIQUÉ No. 52 - DECEMBER 23, 2021  
INFORMATION**

**To members of pastoral teams,  
To priests, deacons, PCLs, LPAs,  
To the faithful active in their communities,  
To members of religious communities,  
To Archdiocese staff,**

Dear brothers and sisters,

Following the various announcements made yesterday, our Archbishop wishes to confirm that we are **going ahead with the Masses of the Christmas season**, according to the health regulations in force and the indications contained in the present communiqué and in the previous one (no. 51, dated December 17).

Here is Archbishop Lépine's message on this matter:

*Dear pastoral staff, teams, and volunteers*

*For the past week we have been plunged into uncertainty by the Omicron variant.*

*First of all, I would like to thank you for your sense of mission, your commitment and your constancy, for almost two years and through fatigue. You serve the People of God and society by developing a hybrid pastoral ministry. You have developed tools to reach people online. When possible, you ensure the openness of the church and the safe circulation of people. In doing so, you have emphasized the importance of spiritual life and the witness of accessibility, both in person and online.*

*The Omicron variant reminds us that we must not let our guard down in the fight against the pandemic. But whether at the mall, the grocery store or the church, preventive measures such as hand washing, masks and distancing ourselves have proven effective.*

*Caution and patience are still required. This means that the **conditions for opening a church and holding celebrations** are, on the one hand, **the indispensable observance of sanitary measures**; and, on the other hand, the **hospitality team** required to supervise the*

*people and their circulation. If for various reasons, including volunteer resources, this path is not feasible, the important thing is to remain "dressed and ready for service" by relying on the grace of God which always makes its way.*

*Places of worship remain an essential service. The first choice is to attend Mass, **whenever possible**. But, **in all freedom, if your pastoral team judges that holding Masses will not be possible in your particular situation**, there are other measures that you can implement, forms of accommodation that you can employ: keeping the doors of the church open; offering communion on the church steps or parking lot to the unvaccinated or to those unable to attend Mass in-person; inviting people to participate in Mass online and offer Holy Communion afterward; etc.*

*With a team, following the same health measures we are accustomed to, as well as the updated requirements of public health and government authorities, we are confident that we can provide a safe environment for all.*

*So far we have been protected by God because He has kept us in the mission. Let us continue to rely on His grace to provide for the care of souls, especially in this time when COVID-19 strikes us hard, and restrictive measures also cause collateral damage in our communities and society.*

*Let us be united, holding together Prayer, Benevolence and Peace*

† *Christian Lépine*  
*Archbishop of Montreal*

With this message from our Archbishop, we must therefore insist on strict adherence to sanitary measures. I encourage you to communicate to your volunteers and parish teams to respect and enforce the following guidelines:

- Do not hold prolonged conversations in the reception areas (porticos, back of the church, etc.);
- Direct people to their seats and instruct them to remain there for the duration of the service; do not allow conversations in the aisles while waiting for the service to begin;
- Distribute communion in the pews, to minimize movement in the assembly;
- Invite participants to leave in an orderly fashion at the end of Mass, with no prolonged conversation inside or outside the church;

- Designate a volunteer to remind the congregation (at the microphone) of the instructions before the beginning of the celebration;

We also present to you some clarifications concerning celebrations in our churches. We also share with you some guidelines concerning parish offices, and working-from-home for employees of Fabriques and other church organizations.

But first, I want to bring to your attention the announcement of the celebration of the Feast of the Epiphany 2022 so that you can reserve the date.

1. **SAVE THE DATE! Festive Gathering for Epiphany – January 15, 2022**

As in past years, Archbishop Christian Lépine invites all pastoral staff and other key players in our diocese to a festive gathering marking the Epiphany. The online celebration will take place on Zoom, on Saturday, January 15 from 10 a.m. to noon. The invitation can be found [here](#). Registration is **not** required, so please do not respond to this communique.

2. **Update on sanitary measures for the Christmas season**

While almost all places of assembly have been closed by government decree, the authorities have decided to keep places of worship open, because they recognize the need for people to gather for worship during these difficult times. However, they require that people who attend places of worship must show their vaccination passports.

This said, here are some clarifications:

- Although a place of worship can be left open to visitors outside of assembly times, visitors must still present their vaccination passport. The regulation applies to any access of the place of worship, and not only to liturgical gatherings;
- The only exception to this rule is for homeless people. "Vaccination passports are required for access to a place of worship. Itinerant persons are exempt from presenting their vaccine passport for access." Source : <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/progress-of-the-covid-19-vaccination/covid-19-vaccination-passport/places-and-activities-requiring-covid-19-vaccination-passport>
- **For baptisms:** it is not possible to use the exceptions provided for marriages and funerals. The vaccination passport is therefore required and the capacity limits must be respected;
- **Catechetical activities:** the rules governing community organizations must be applied. <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/measures-in->

force/community-organizations However, it is useful to remember that school and extracurricular activities have been cancelled since December 21. The utmost caution is advised and it is best to postpone planned activities until the epidemiological situation is under control;

- **Private activities in a rented room or indoor public place:** the limit is 10 people. <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/measures-in-force/activities-outings/private-events-public-space>. In the case of a room located in a place of worship, the vaccination passport is required, since it is generally required to access the place of worship.

All health regulations that apply to places of worship can change quickly as the pandemic evolves. Let's all stay tuned to the announcements. Although the Archdiocesan offices will be closed for the holiday season, I will try to send you the necessary instructions and adjustments as soon as possible.

### 3. **Teleworking**

Faced with the increase in cases of COVID-19 and in hospitalizations, the government calls on employers to advocate a return to working from home whenever possible. Until further notice, we are therefore asking Fabriques and other church organizations to return to the practices put in place during the first waves of the pandemic.

For example:

1. Reception at the parish office by appointment only; presence at the office only for dealing with emergencies; in these cases, guarantee the strict application of the required preventive measures: distancing, mandatory wearing of masks, hand disinfection, etc.
  2. Posting of contact information (email and phone number of a receptionist) at the office door and in any other relevant location);
  3. Voicemail and website with relevant information;
  4. If possible, transferring calls to a designated receptionist working from home;
- In addition, please consider those who may be more isolated due to the measures in place, by:
5. Broadcasting your community's celebrations and events online (Zoom; Facebook live; YouTube; etc.);
  6. Making time to listen to people in need, either on the phone or via the internet.

Dear brothers and sisters, it only remains for me to wish you, to wish all of us, beyond the trials and despite the accumulated fatigue, to live this Holy Season well: in the true Peace that comes to us from Heaven, and in the profound Joy that springs from this "jealous love" that the Lord manifests to us by giving us his only Son.

In Him,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+Alain Faubert". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

† Alain Faubert, VG  
Auxiliary Bishop of Montreal