

- *by Most Rev. Thomas Daly*

August 19, 2021

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Earlier this week, Pope Francis issued a [video](#) in which he appealed for people to get inoculated against COVID-19. He said, "Vaccination is a simple but profound way of promoting the common good and caring for each other, especially the most vulnerable." The Church has made it clear that it is morally permissible to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

However, I am very much aware that some individuals struggle with poor health, underlying medical issues, or sincere moral objections to vaccines. It is important to remember that in Catholic moral theology, a person's conscience may not be violated. We who are bishops and priests are called to assist with informing a person's conscience. We do not replace one's conscience. If a person has health concerns or moral objections about vaccines, he or she should not be forced into being vaccinated. Moreover, priests should not be involved in signing any document concerning the conscience of another.

As you have heard by now, Governor Jay Inslee has announced a statewide indoor mask mandate for individuals without regard to his or her vaccination status. The mandate becomes effective on Monday, August 23 and applies to indoor activities including parish events such as the celebration of Mass.

The governor also announced mandatory vaccination for all employees working in K-12 schools and higher education. This includes private and religious schools. While we encourage vaccination, we do not intend on violating the consciences of our Catholic school teachers nor do we intend on vouching for another person's conscience. We are in conversation with civic and health officials about government mandated vaccination requirements and will offer further guidance to parish and school personnel in due time.

Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us.

Live, Jesus, in our hearts forever.

In Christ,

Bishop Daly