

September 30, 2021

Dear Reverend Father/Deacon:

I write to you with both a request and a directive that follows from the request. My request is that all clergy within the Diocese of Burlington will be vaccinated against the Covid-19 virus. My reasons for this are simple and clear: both Pope Francis and emeritus Pope Benedict have been vaccinated, the CDF has directed that it is morally licit to receive the vaccines even if they were created or tested using cells harvested from aborted fetuses, and Pope Francis has encouraged Catholics to be vaccinated as an “act of charity” that protects not just themselves but others. Gentleman, as ordained clergy in the Catholic Church we should be leading by example.

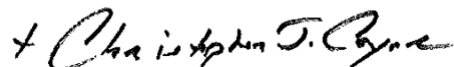
Still, I know that some of you, for your own reasons, have chosen not to be vaccinated and do not plan to be so in the future. I leave you to your personal choice and privacy in this matter. That having been said, choosing not to be vaccinated, as with all choices in life, has ramifications.

Subsequently, any priest or deacon in the Diocese of Burlington who has not been vaccinated is required to wear a mask when celebrating the Sacraments and meeting with or visiting any individual(s) while carrying out their ministry. Additionally, non-vaccinated clergy are also required to be tested for COVID-19 infection every other week, either through regular testing as you visit hospitals or nursing homes or at any other testing site. This is for the protection of your community and other individuals and is not optional. I rely on the honor system completely for this and your promise of obedience to me as your bishop in this matter.

Please know I have given this matter a great deal of consideration and time and have consulted with the Presbyteral Council, receiving their advice as well. I will keep all posted as we move forward and will adjust the policy and directives as necessary.

Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher J. Coyne". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

The Most Reverend Christopher J. Coyne  
Bishop of Burlington