



Welcome to 2022 and the **Red Level** and sorry if you receive this more than once.

We now have cases of Omicron in the community. I think we all knew that this was coming, and we now need to ensure that we keep ourselves and others as safe as possible. The Government has moved the country to LEVEL RED and with the move COVID requirements around gatherings have been changed.

The most significant impact for us, as a faith community, of this move to **RED**, is that attendance limits on the number who can attend faith-based events have changed and social distancing of 1 metre have been reintroduced. The new regime became effective from 11:59pm on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> January and attendance limits have changed for faith-based events and other such gatherings

<b>VACCINE PASS events</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>(previously no limit)</b>
<b>RESTRICTED NUMBER events</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>(previously limit of 50)</b>

This now means that for every Mass being held, weekday and weekends will have a limit on the number of people allowed in the Church at one time.

We have heard from Cardinal John, and he has given us some guidelines to help us manage the challenges ahead of us, in a way which is sustainable to everyone. Cardinal John has asked us to remind everyone that.

- *the dispensation from the Sunday obligation to attend Mass is still in place.*
- *you should not come to Mass if they have any cold or flu-like or other symptoms.*
- *you must obey the rules around isolating – if you are waiting for a test result or are a contact of an infected person, please stay at home to limit the possible spread of the virus.*
- *if you are coming to Mass, you must wear a mask, practice hand hygiene and be very aware of social distancing.*
- *The numbers we need to cater for with Masses limited to 100 for vaccine pass holders has meant some parishes can no longer continue Masses without vaccine passes. This has been necessary so we can cater for as many people as possible, without overloading priests with extra Masses.*

*The usual precautions will continue with Masses, no holy water, communion under one kind and only in the hand. Cardinal John has asked us as a Parish to continue with no singing in the Church during Mass. Even though a choir or one person singing is technically within the rules, this could result in the spread of the virus and we must take no chances.*

He has also advised that if a priest is sick or must isolate, the Masses he is scheduled for should be cancelled as finding a replacement would be unrealistic.

## What does this mean for us here at Our Lady of the Valleys Parish?



### WEEKDAY MASSES (Tuesday to Saturday morning)

No change to the way that we celebrate Mass but there is now a limit on attendance set at 25. We are not expecting this to be an issue as we usually have less than that each day. Previous expectations around contact tracing, mask wearing 1 metre distancing etc continue, **Prebooking will NOT be required.**

**PLEASE NOTE: that if the limit is reached no further admittance to the celebrations will be allowed.**

### SUNDAY MASSES (Saturday Vigil 5:30pm and Sunday 8:30 and 10:30 am)

As a response to these new limits the Parish Council and Finance Committee have spent time carefully and prayerfully looking at how we can provide an opportunity for as many parishioners as possible are able to gather for Sunday Mass (incl the Saturday Vigil). If no change was made only 225 people would be able to attend Sunday Masses in Our Lady of the Valleys Parish – 25 on Saturday evening and 100 each at the two Masses on Sunday. This is a significant limitation on congregational attendance

To give more opportunities for parishioners to attend Sunday Mass it has been resolved that **from Friday 28<sup>th</sup> January the Saturday evening 5:30pm Mass from change from a RESTRICTED NUMBERS event to a VACCINE PASS event.**

With this change it means that up to 300 parishioners can celebrate together over the three Masses celebrated. The two Masses on Sunday morning will continue to VACCINE PASS events **but with a limit of attendance at 100.**

**Prebooking using the Picktime booking system will be required for all VACCINE PASS events. All three Sunday Masses have been rescheduled in the Picktime booking system. Please if you can book as early as possible.** Booking sheets are downloaded from the online system, printed and taken to the church about an hour before the Mass starts. So to ensure your details are recorded for checking in please try and book at before this time.

This change has not been made lightly. It was made hoping to provide an opportunity for the greatest number of parishioners to experience Mass on Sunday. **Sadly, it means that only those who have a VACCINE PASS can attend Sunday Masses. For those who do not have a VACCINE PASS we ask your understanding of this change.**

Noting the continued dispensation from the Sunday obligation offered in these challenging times, parishioners without Vaccine Passes are welcome to come to Mass at any of the weekday Masses being offered in both churches as no Vaccine Passes are required to attend (limit of 25 at each such event). Online Masses continue to be stream from a variety of sources both in New Zealand and overseas which continue to provide some spiritual comfort and allow online participation with a Sunday Mass.

From FRIDAY 28<sup>th</sup> January **ALL Sunday Masses** (Sat 5:30pm, and Sunday 8:30 am and 10:30 am) will be VACCINATION PASS MASSES. **Note when this number is reached, you will not be permitted to enter the Church. This is for the protection of everyone.**

### General Summary and Comments

- Everyone must sign in using the QR code system of the paper system – this is extremely important for tracing if by chance we have a case of Omicron at one of our Masses. If you are attending a vaccine pass required Mass, you must also show your proof of vaccine.
- Masks must be always worn during the Mass. If you have an exemption from wearing a mask, then you must produce proof from a doctor. The latest advice is that masks will play a big part in protecting us and help slow down the spread of this infection. Please don't put volunteers in the position where they need to ask you to put on a mask.
- You will note that the signage on pews ends of every alternative row. This is to ensure that keep you correctly spaced from people not in your bubble. Please only sit in the indicated rows.
- Communion will only be given in the hand, and this will be given to you at your seat by a Eucharistic Minister (no queuing for Communion) Leaving alternative rows empty helps to facilitate the distribution of Holy Communion As they approach you, please stand, hold out your hand and once you have received the host, remove your mask consume it, and then please put your mask back on immediately.
- Please remain in the pews throughout Mass
- There will be NO collections during the service but collection boxes will be available in the foyer of the Churches for monetary donations.
- There will be no Offertory Procession.
- For all Sunday Masses (Saturday Vigil and Sunday Morning) Masses it is now necessary to register to attend through the **Picktime** (a link is on the parish website [www.olv.org.nz](http://www.olv.org.nz) website as we have previously done. Fill in your details, your name and a contact email address and phone number. You should receive a confirmation email once you have registered.

**PLEASE NOTE:** All Sunday Masses have an attendance limitation. Once these are booked out you cannot attend the Mass. Please note that if you are do not prebook we cannot guarantee that you will be admitted to the celebration as the limit may be reached for those prebooked. If you are having trouble registering, please contact the office at [office@olv.org.nz](mailto:office@olv.org.nz) and Jovena will help and she will let you know if you have a space or not.

We ask parishioners for their understanding and patience as we make these changes. As always things are constantly changing in this COVID area and setting and the way we celebrate Mass together as a community may be change. We will endeavour to keep you up to date with the changes and how they may affect parishioners.

In all these times remember that whatever the times ahead present to us we are always in the hands and care of our Loving God.

Please feel free to contact the Presbytery on 04 972 4282 if you would like more information around the effect of these **TRAFFIC LIGHT RED** settings and the Parish's response.

Faithfully

Father Tony