

NEWS

Mass only for the vaccinated: Catholic Church in Malaysia bends to gov't orders

The decision was announced in a note from Archbishop Julian Leow, restricting Mass attendance to the vaccinated, following the government's mandate.



Julian Leow

screenshot

Michael Haynes

Wed Sep 29, 2021 - 12:20 pm EDT

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia ([LifeSiteNews](#)) – In line with government policy, Malaysia's Archbishop Julian Leow issued a directive forbidding Catholics from coming to Mass if they have not taken the COVID-19 injection, in a move described as “really disheartening.”

The order came via a [chancery note](#) dated September 28, laying out the plan for the resumption of the celebration of Mass which has been prohibited by the government since May 3. Under the [various directives](#) laid out by the archdiocese, the archbishop gave permission for public Mass to resume from October 9, but with numerous restrictions.

The archdiocese attested to LifeSiteNews that they were merely following government dictates in the gradual emergence from a national lockdown.

However, some Catholics in Malaysia told LifeSiteNews they were “utterly gutted and disgusted” by the archbishop's statement, saying they “feel like lost sheep without a shepherd.”

Mass restricted to the vaccinated

“Full vaccination is required for all those who wish to attend public Masses in states under Phase 2 and Phase 3,” Leow wrote, promoting the [abortion-tainted injections](#).

According to the note, “full vaccination” equates to having had two doses of either Pfizer's, AstraZeneca's, or Sinovac's injection, along with a 14/day waiting period, or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson or Cansino vaccine, along with a 28/day waiting period.

Malaysia is emerging from a national lockdown begun earlier this summer, moving from the most restrictive Phase 1 to Phase 4, though most states are in Phase 2 – which allows five fully vaccinated people or two unvaccinated people to meet. Much of society is limited to those who are vaccinated, including places of worship.

However, the 57-year-old prelate ordered even parish in the least restrictive Phase 4 “continue to admit only fully vaccinated individuals in the interim,” with some exception made for Confirmation candidates.

Further restrictions imposed on churches in the chancery note included their being at only one-third capacity “to allow adequate distancing.”

“Pre-registration” would also be used along with seat numbering, in order to conduct “contact tracing.” As part of the information necessary to attend church, Catholics must [provide](#) their “name, contact details, temperature reading, time of visit, places visited in the Church/chapel compound,” either via an app or on paper.

Church simply implementing state dictate

Archbishop Leow's note, written on his behalf by the chancellor, Fr. Michal Chua, would appear to be in direct violation of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's (CDF) 2020 note on COVID injections, stating that they "must be voluntary."

However, Chua told LifeSiteNews that the archbishop's "pastoral recommendation" was not a mandate, and that the "requirement for vaccination as a prerequisite for admission to our churches is not imposed by the Catholic Church but part of nation wide government mandates."

Stating that it would be an "offence" for the Church to allow an unvaccinated person inside, Chua acknowledged that "this is a serious form of discrimination and a curtailment of religious freedom, but the faithful are aware that these restrictions are imposed by the government in all sectors of public life in Malaysia."

"We see in the current protocols that the government will eventually ease the requirement for vaccinations in the fourth and last phase," Chua continued.

"We hope that by the time we arrive at this phase the dire situation in our country will improve to a point where it is safe to allow the unvaccinated and those ineligible for vaccination (children below the age of 12) to return to our churches and other sectors of life. In the meantime, our clergy have been instructed to find pastoral ways of providing for the spiritual needs of the faithful without flouting the government mandates, e.g. providing the sacrament of penance and holy communion outside of Mass."

But in addition to seeming to reject the CDF's stipulation for "voluntary" vaccines, Leow's note runs afoul of advice from the U.S. National Catholic Bioethics Center, which described "coercive measures requiring persons" to take such a vaccine as "ethically unacceptable."

"If a Catholic comes to an informed and sure judgment in conscience that he or she should not receive a vaccine, then the Catholic Church requires that the person follow this certain judgment of conscience and refuse the vaccine," wrote the NCBC.

'Not a single priest has stood up to object'

LifeSiteNews contacted two Catholics in Malaysia, who spoke of how they were "utterly gutted and disgusted" by the news.

Noting how the Catholic population is so small in the country, around 3%, they described how "the one place, our church, where we should find strength, comfort and receive Jesus, is choosing the same stance as the Malaysian government to deny non-vaccinated people entry anywhere, is really disheartening."

“Not a single priest has stood up to object these SOPs since Day One,” LifeSite’s sources stated. “In fact, they’ve all been hiding behind these guidelines for two years now. We went for months last year without attending public mass, no Easter and Christmas last year either. And this year, we’ve been kept away since April after Easter. They only recently opened the church for drive-through Holy Communion, can you imagine the mockery!”

U.K. commentator and author Deacon Nick Donnelly accused Leow of “breaking one of the fundamental laws of the sacramental life of the Church ... the right of the faithful to receive the sacraments provided they ‘are properly disposed, and are not prohibited by [canon] law from receiving them.’”

Stating that Leow was “using the Sacraments in an attempted act of coercion against the consciences of Catholics who recoil against receiving an abortion-tainted jab,” Donnelly said this “is breaking a fundamental moral law of the Church,” that “man ‘must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters.’”

Baptism postponed, confirmation subject to COVID testing

The archbishop, appointed by Pope Francis in 2014, also ordered that infant baptisms and first Holy Communions be “suspended until further notice,” due to the “higher risks posed to infants and children below the age of 12 years with the emergence of variants and the ineligibility of this category to receive vaccination.” The only exception made to this dictate was allowing baptism in the case of emergency.

Confirmation is one of the few sacraments mentioned which is not limited to the vaccinated, as the faithful can take a COVID-19 test “48 hours before their Confirmation.” If confessions are offered more than 24 hours separate from confirmation, then the archbishop asked people to take two tests.

Aside from those who are to be confirmed, the archdiocesan note states that all others in the church “should be fully vaccinated.”

Leow directed that “parishes should ensure that only those who have tested negative for COVID 19 are allowed to come for confession/confirmation.” It is unclear whether the direction for negative test results for confession is related just to pre-confirmation confession, or confession generally.

Access to sacraments ‘one of those sacrifices to be made’

“Vaccination is proving to be the best way to reduce the spread of Covid-19 and its variants, which are on the rise and threaten to overwhelm the hospital system, seriously impacting the level of care medical professionals can provide to the ill and the vulnerable in our country,” added the archbishop, defending his directives. “The Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur continues to do its utmost to protect both the physical and spiritual needs of its faithful.”

Provision for the unvaccinated could be reduced to drive-through reception of Holy Communion, according to a prior chancery note issued August 31.

Additionally, Leow noted that the Archdiocese understood “the need to make sacrifices to protect the common good, and to be prudent in slowing the spread of the virus,” seeming to note access to the sacraments as one of those sacrifices to be made.

Furthering this contrast of the sacraments with apparent “safety” from infection, the archdiocesan [COVID-19 webpage](#) noted, “The worship of God and the celebration of the sacraments are the paramount activities of the Church. We must, however, balance this priority with the safety that must be accorded to our members. One cannot be promoted at the expense of the other.”

Malaysia, a country of 32 million people, has seen under 26,000 deaths with COVID-19 since March 2020.

For respectful communications:

Archbishop Julian Leow
Cardijn House
528 Jalan Bukit Nanas
50250 Kuala Lumpur
Email: chancery@archkl.org
Phone: +603 2078 8828

