



***"It's the duty of everyone to defend religious freedom and promote it for all people"***  
- ***Pope Francis***

## **Restrictions on Places of Worship in Australia, Canada and Ireland**

### **Australia**

- Beginning September 11, a roadmap to ease COVID-19 restrictions was published for "low risk" areas. It allows citizens to leave home for limited hours a day and limited distance to shop, exercise or work. Rules include proof of vaccination before entering a church. <sup>(1)</sup>
- These rules are being challenged by many religious leaders. "We explained (to the Health Minister) that all our faiths are inclined to allow all comers to worship, that many pastors and faithful would be uneasy with restricting worship to the fully vaccinated and that doing so could prove divisive," said Catholic Archbishop Fisher. "Race, gender, ethnicity, age, education, wealth or health status (including vaccination) must not be points of division within the Christian community or barriers to communion with Jesus." <sup>(2)</sup>
- "We want everybody to be safe in church, but we also want to make sure we minister to everybody," said Anglican Archbishop Raffle. <sup>(3)</sup>
- "Even if it is consistent and churches are treated the same as cinemas, I still question whether the government has the right to impose on churches something we don't accept," said Minister Phil Colgan. <sup>(4)</sup>

### **Canada**

- During the tightest COVID-19 restrictions - a time of stress and anxiety for many - it wasn't possible for people in Canada to turn to religious organizations for support and comfort. Churches, synagogues and mosques had to negotiate regulations that changed frequently. Often, there could be no in-person services at all.
- Rev. Susan Chisholm said capacity restrictions affected the fellowship associated with church gathering. "It's a community that's really about hospitality and welcome as much as ritual and spiritual practice," she said. <sup>(5)</sup>
- The country hoped to enter a Phase 5 reopening plan in mid-September that will begin a return to in-person church services and major religious events like funerals, etc. Rev. Robert Doyle of Halifax said that many families had to delay funerals and now want to put their relative to rest. <sup>(6)</sup>

### **Ireland**

- Religious services resumed for the first time in May, 2021 but the sacraments of Baptism, Communion and Confirmation did not return.
- "I don't see any reason why the celebration of confirmation or holy communion should cause any concern on public health grounds because we have mass in all our churches, carefully regulated for 50 people," said Bishop Doran. <sup>(7)</sup> Five Roman Catholic bishops planned to defy these restrictions in Ireland's 22 diocese in August.
- The Catholic Archbishop of Dublin said that parents must be trusted to know how to protect the health of their children and that the ban on communions and confirmations was seen as discriminatory. "A small number of people are going to parties, but the vast majority are not organizing big parties. We need to trust and have faith in parents," said Fr. Joe McDonald. <sup>(8)</sup>

theguardian.com, 9/9/21(1); cathnews.co.nz, 9/13/21(2)(3)(4); nsw.gov.au; acc.org.au; cbc.ca, 9/12/21(5)(6); novascotia.ca/reopening, 9/8/21; toronto.ca/COVID, 7/16/21; reuters, 8/3/21(7); rtei.ie, 8/6/21(8)

***"Guard with jealous attention the public liberty." Patrick Henry***

Shortened Version:

## Focus on Religious Freedom

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**Australia:** Beginning on Sept. 11, some parts of the country initiated new Covid rules allowing citizens to leave home for limited hours a day and limited distance from home in order to shop, exercise or work. Proof of vaccination is required to enter a church. These rules are being challenge by many religious leaders. "... many pastors and faithful would be uneasy with restricting worship to the fully vaccinated and doing so could prove divisive," said Catholic Archbishop Fisher. <sup>(1)</sup>

**Canada:** Churches, synagogues and mosques had to negotiate Covid regulations that changed frequently. Often, there could be no in-person services at all. The country hoped to enter a new reopening phase in mid-September that will begin a return to in-person church services and major religious events like funerals, etc <sup>(2)</sup>

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