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People wear protective masks as Pope Francis celebrates a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica at the

People wear protective masks as Pope Francis celebrates a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican May 16, 2021. Italy is requiring proof of vaccination to enter a variety of indoor areas, including restaurants and movie theaters, but the Italian bishops say it will not be required to go to church. (CNS photo/Donatella Giagnori, pool)



by Catholic News Service

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Proof of vaccination will not be required for people going to Mass in Italy, but will be necessary for access to church-run museums, conferences and for wedding receptions and other festivities held in a church hall, the Italian bishops' conference said.

The Italian government announced in late July that beginning Aug. 6, people over the age of 12 must have a European "green pass," a vaccination certificate available both as a printout and a QR code on a smartphone, to enter a variety of indoor venues, including gyms, restaurants, museums and movie theaters.

The Italian bishops' conference posted a note about "the green pass and liturgical celebrations" on its website July 29.

The pass, it said, is not required for going to Mass or joining in processions, but health measures adopted in May 2020 when the COVID-19 lockdown ended remain

in effect: People going to Mass must wear a mask; pews or chairs must be spaced at least three feet apart; the faithful may receive Communion only in the hand; there should be no shaking hands at the sign of peace.

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However, the note said, the green pass is required for people entering church-owned or church-operated movie theaters, museums, restaurants and coffee bars, sporting events, conferences, indoor swimming pools, gyms, social centers and reception venues.

Children under the age of 12 and people with a medical certificate proving they should not be vaccinated are exempt.

The note on the green pass was published along with a letter from Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti, president of the Italian bishops' conference, thanking health care workers, priests, the elderly and families for all the sacrifices they have made during the pandemic and urging them to continue to be cautious.

"The resumption of pastoral activities in the fall probably will still be conditioned by the pandemic," he said. "We are convinced, however, that the synodal process, which will be in full swing right after the summer, will be a propitious occasion for relaunching and accompanying communities, as well as a prophetic voice with respect to the demands of the present and the future."