



DIOCESE OF ST. CATHARINES

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THE CHANCERY

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MEMO

To: All Clergy and Religious in the Diocese of St. Catharines

From: Bishop Gerard Bergie

Date: April 16, 2021

This afternoon, the Premier of Ontario extended the province-wide “Stay-at-home order” until at least May 16th. Additionally, new restrictions have been put in place.

- Beginning Monday, April 19th, churches are limited to a maximum capacity of 10 people. This includes all Masses and liturgical celebrations, including weddings and funerals.

Due to new restrictions:

- Confirmations scheduled between April 8th and May 31st are postponed. Rescheduling will be discussed with pastors as soon as possible. Scheduling for 2022 confirmations is on hold.
- First Communion celebrations scheduled in April and until May 31st for classes are postponed indefinitely. If possible, in particular cases pastors may consult with parents/guardians and have candidates celebrate their First Communion at a Sunday Mass, with their family.
- If possible, and in keeping with capacity limits and all COVID-19 safety protocols, pastors may consider adding Communion services to their Sunday and/or weekday Mass schedules for the spiritual welfare of their parishioners.
- If possible, and in keeping with capacity limits and all COVID-19 safety protocols, pastors may wish to have the church open for specified times for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and personal prayer.
- Given the diversity of parish demographics in the Diocese of St. Catharines, each pastor is responsible to determine if they are able to safely open their church to the public (to a maximum of 10 people) for Sunday and/or weekday Masses, other liturgical celebrations or personal prayer. Pastors must be certain that all government and diocesan COVID-19 practices will be followed; if this is doubtful, the church must remain closed to the public.
- Parishioners are reminded that Bishop Bergie’s dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and on Holy Days of Obligation, granted on March 16, 2020, is ongoing. All are encouraged to view online/livestream/televised Masses. A listing of diocesan parishes with livestreaming can be found at www.saintcd.com.

- In view of the rapid spread and grave threat of new COVID-19 variants, any parishioner who is unable to wear a mandatory face covering should not attend any church service. Voluntary compliance with this basic public health directive reflects our fundamental belief in the sanctity of all human life, gives honour to God and demonstrates love for our neighbours.
- The Chancery office, and all parish offices are to be closed to the public for the duration of the stay-at-home order. Every effort should be made so that parish staff are able to work from home.
- The most important thing that we can do, as people of faith, is to pray for those affected by the coronavirus, and for healthcare providers, caregivers, and researchers.
- I have included with this memo a prayer (previously sent to parishes on March 12, 2020) that you may wish to offer as the world continues to deal with this pandemic.

“Jesus Christ, you traveled through towns and villages curing every disease and illness. At your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus, that we may experience your healing love.

Heal those who are sick with the virus. May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care.

Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbors from helping one another.

Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders. Jesus Christ, healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow.

Be with those who have died from the virus. May they be at rest with you in your eternal peace. Be with the families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair. May they know your peace.

Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. May they know your protection and peace. Be with the leaders of all nations. Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve. Give them the wisdom to invest in long-term solutions that will help prepare for or prevent future outbreaks. May they know your peace, as they work together to achieve it on earth.

Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, Jesus Christ, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare. In place of our anxiety, give us your peace” (America Magazine, March 2, 2020).