



3 pages via e-mail

January 13, 2021

To all clergy and staff of the Archdiocese of Toronto,

Yesterday, Premier Ford announced that the Province of Ontario will be entering a state of emergency in an effort to address the increasing number of positive Covid-19 cases in the province. In light of this announcement and other developments I would like to provide an update covering a number of important issues:

Sacramental Celebrations

- The latest provincial restrictions do not impact our current limit of 10 persons (including celebrant and those assisting with ministry) present inside a place of worship at any time. The current “lockdown” measures relating to places of worship have been extended by the province until at least Thursday, February 11, 2021.
- The province has also instituted a “stay-at-home order”, effective Thursday, January 14, 2021, asking people to remain at home wherever possible, going outside of the home only for essential activities. These include shopping for groceries, medical appointments, exercise, etc.
- It is our firm belief that spiritual sustenance is essential for the mental, spiritual and physical well-being of the faithful and the church offers essential support for many who are isolated or vulnerable. During this period of pandemic, churches in the archdiocese continue to offer livestream services and other creative outreach ministries for which I am most grateful. I also ask churches, that are able to do so safely, to continue to remain open for private prayer and, where feasible, to offer Holy Communion Services on weekends as previously communicated. Parishes must ensure our stringent WorshipSafe guidelines are followed and participation is limited to no more than 10 people inside the church at any given time.
- Pastors should also ensure that it is clear to the faithful that the dispensation from their Sunday obligation remains and that those who are symptomatic, have a compromised immune system or are at a greater risk of infection, should remain home.
- **NEW** – We have received numerous inquiries requesting the celebration of Mass for weddings and funerals. If a pastor receives such a request, it may be granted. I would ask that the regional bishop be informed of these cases. Please note that funeral Masses do not include memorial Masses. At present, weddings and funerals are also limited to no more than 10 persons, including those presiding and assisting with the liturgy.



Sanitizing Pews/Seating Areas

- **NEW** - A recent update of the WorshipSafe guidelines for Catholic churches throughout the province was conducted. In relation to the sanitization of seating areas in churches, the following updated direction should now be utilized:

If a pew will not be used within an hour of the last occupancy, there should be no need to disinfect, though periodic regular cleaning should still continue. Where the pew is scheduled to be used within an hour of last occupancy, disinfection should consist of running a disinfectant-laden cloth along the tops and sides of each pew. This approach is likely to be sufficient to combat pathogens, and as more research is done, such requirements may be eventually be dispensed with.

Parish Offices and the Catholic Pastoral Centre

- The province has reiterated the importance of employees working virtually wherever possible. This should continue for parishes and at the Catholic Pastoral Centre and satellite offices. Human Resources can be consulted if there are additional questions regarding specific situations.

Travel for Priests

- Priests should be making every effort at this time to care for the needs of the faithful and I am inspired by the incredible efforts exhibited by so many priests throughout the archdiocese. At this time, personal travel outside of the province is not permitted without the permission of the regional bishop and should only be requested in exceptional circumstances.

Preparation for Lent

- I will be meeting with the Council of Priests next week to receive feedback on the current pastoral situation and to discuss how to best care for the faithful during the upcoming season of Lent. Further updates will be forthcoming.

Covid-19 Vaccine

- We pray that the vaccination process that has recently commenced in Canada and around the world will greatly contribute to a swift end to the pandemic. We long for the day where, once again, we may return, without restrictions, to full and active participation in the Eucharist, the source and summit of our spiritual journey.

I encourage Catholics in the Archdiocese of Toronto to be vaccinated at the appropriate time, given the distribution plans outlined by the relevant authorities. If requested, parishes may provide space in the parish hall or other appropriate location for health professionals to administer the vaccine.



There have been extensive discussions regarding the ethics of vaccine production and use for Catholics. In the coming weeks, we will be providing additional resources – at this time, I refer you to the following documents on this topic:

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith:

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20201221_nota-vaccini-anticovid_en.html

Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute:

<https://www.archtoronto.org/Blog/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=240>

<https://www.archtoronto.org/Blog/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=241>

Thank you for your inspiring efforts during these very challenging days. I recognize that these restrictions are incredibly frustrating for all of us. Out of love for one another, we must make every effort to combat this deadly pandemic that has taken the lives of so many, both here at home and around the world.

I am most grateful for your leadership and pastoral care of the faithful. Please be assured of my ongoing prayers.

Sincerely in Christ,

† Thomas Card. Collins

Thomas Cardinal Collins
Archbishop of Toronto