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To: The Faithful of the Diocese of London

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I pray that you and your families are safe and healthy during these challenging times.

Following Premier Ford's announcement earlier today, I am happy to inform you that our Diocese is now beginning the process of reopening our churches. This is exciting news for us and all other faith communities in Ontario. The announcement, with the changes it makes to restrictions on gatherings, recognizes the importance of places of worship. We are grateful to Premier Ford and Minister McNaughton, the Minister designated to lead the coordination with faith communities during the pandemic.

With this news, I ask for your patience. We have been working hard to prepare for the reopening of our churches, but we will need some time to make sure our communities can worship safely.

As we move towards reopening as soon as possible, the following priorities guide our planning:

- The health and safety of the faithful, clergy, staff and volunteers;
- Proactive measures to avoid the potential of a second wave of this virus;
- Recognizing the basic commandment – love of God and of neighbour – we have a responsibility to care for one another and protect our communities.

Be assured that a detailed plan to reopen is now being finalized. We have not yet set a date, but it will be communicated as soon as we are ready. Many things need to be put in place before we can reopen, including adjusting church seating plans, and training clergy, lay ministers, staff and volunteers in how to be safe and keep our communities safe. We pray that these extraordinary measures will be temporary, but for this to be the case we must follow the advice of health authorities to minimize any potential transmission of the virus when we resume services.

I realize that not being able to celebrate Mass and not having access to the sacraments has been very painful for all of us. It has been encouraging to me to receive many messages from people who have used this time to grow spiritually as they found other ways to pray, worship online and be closer to God. I thank you, our people, and our priests and pastoral teams, for the remarkable efforts you have made to support one another in the faith over the past several months.

Given the capacity restrictions of 30% that are in place when we reopen our churches, parishes will continue to livestream Masses wherever possible, recognizing all will not be able to gather at this time. Because some people may be sick, have a compromised immune system, or feel uncomfortable returning to church, the dispensation of the obligation for Sunday Mass remains in effect until further notice.

Approaching these uncertain days with a spirit of kindness and generosity to one another will help us all as we navigate the path ahead. I continue to be inspired by the countless acts of goodwill and charity taking place throughout our Diocese.

May we continue to pray for the sick, those who have died during this pandemic and for those caring for them. Be assured of my gratitude for your patience and faithfulness during this closure period. You remain in my prayers.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Ronald P. Fabbro, C.S.B.
Bishop of London