

COVID-19 Update for October 20

COVID-19 UPDATE FROM BISHOP FABBRO (Update #12)

During the recent Plenary Session of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, Cardinal Collins reported that he had a conversation with Premier Ford about our provincial *Worshipsafe* document on which our diocesan Directives are based. The Cardinal asked if churches would be affected by new regulations in light of the second wave, even possibly shut down. Premier Ford reinforced that our churches are safe and that because protocols are being taken seriously, he has no intention of changing things with regard to churches. He encouraged the Cardinal to keep up the good work. The Cardinal warned, however, that we not ease up on things.

I am relating this conversation to encourage us to remain vigilant with respect to protocols, so that our people know they will be safe when they come to our churches.

1. Christmas and New Year's Day Masses

Questions are coming to the Episcopal Vicars regarding Christmas celebrations, particularly around increasing the number of Masses on Christmas Eve and starting Masses in the afternoon, to make time for more celebrations. In their consideration of these questions, the Episcopal Council noted that we should expect the same restrictions that we have now (masks, 30% capacity, two-metre distance, cleaning after each service) still being in place. Parish leaders will determine their Mass schedules for Christmas accordingly

- The Bishop grants a general dispensation for the obligation to celebrate or participate in Mass on the Octave day of Christmas, the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God. No Masses need to be scheduled in any parish for this day.

2. Christmas “Giving Trees” and other Assistance to the Needy

Parishes need to strategize on the local level to ensure any such activity is carried out with extreme caution including such practices as:

- Safe controls for handling items that are donated – they should be isolated for 72 hours before being handled by volunteers;
- Safe delivery to maintain distance between volunteers and recipients;
- Encouraging cash donations instead of items where and when possible.

Parishes may wish to consult the local SSVP or the Salvation Army for other suggestions.

3. **Singing during Mass**

There have been many questions asked about the restrictions on singing during Mass. Earlier discussion at the Episcopal Council led to the decision to restrict all singing during Mass based on the liturgical principle of “full, active, and conscious participation”, a cornerstone of Vatican II. In light of the many who asked for reconsideration of this decision, given the validity of participating while listening, the following directions are to be observed:

- Singing during Mass is allowed by a single cantor accompanied by a single musician. These two people must maintain a three-metre (ten-foot) distance from each other and from any member of the congregation. Choir members do not assist the cantor.
- Members of the congregation must be instructed not to sing, but to participate by listening and praying quietly. This instruction may need to be repeated if forgotten or not observed.
- Singing is limited to the times when the main hymns would be sung. The processional and recessional hymns should be brief since the processions are brief (sacristy to altar). Longer hymns may be sung at the time of the Preparation of the Gifts and the Communion Procession.
- All parts of the Mass must be recited so that the congregation is able to participate fully at these moments: the Glory to God, the Responsorial Psalm, the Eucharistic acclamations, and the Lamb of God.
- At funeral Masses, the Song of Farewell may be sung by a cantor.

4. **Masses in Nursing or Retirement Homes**

These Masses are not allowed, even if invited by the managers of such places. There is too great a risk to spread the virus.

This restriction does not preclude the celebration of the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick for someone who is actively dying. All the protocols of the particular home must be followed with respect to sanitization and the use of personal protective equipment.

5. **Mass for All Souls' Day Remembering Victims of COVID-19**

It is requested that, where a parish Mass will be offered on 2 November, an intention be included in the Prayer of the Faithful for the victims of COVID-19. At an appropriate time in the future, the whole diocese will join together in the celebration of a Mass of Thanksgiving and Remembrance for all those who died during the pandemic.

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

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