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OTTAWA-CORNWALL
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Chancery
1247 Kilborn Place
Ottawa ON K1H 6K9
www.archoc.ca

La Chancellerie
1247, place Kilborn
Ottawa ON K1H 6K9
☎ 613 738-5025 ☎ 613 738-0130

Date: December 21, 2020
To: Parishes, priests and deacons
From: Fr. Dan Van Delst, Chancellor
Re: Province of Ontario – New COVID-19 Measures

On December 21, 2020 the Province of Ontario announced new COVID-19 measures. They come into effect starting at 12:01am on **December 26, 2020**. Southern Ontario which includes the areas of Ottawa and Cornwall will be in Lockdown (grey) for 28 days.

Religious services (i.e. Masses) will be allowed Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. As COVID-19 numbers continue to be a concern, parishes are asked to encourage their volunteers in their efforts to carefully screen those who seek to enter the church, ensure physical distancing, monitor the wearing of masks and disinfect surfaces between Masses. A reminder that singing by the congregation is not permitted. The recommended norm for music is to have an instrumentalist and a cantor (or two). Please note: if you are planning a choir, the restrictions of “performing arts facilities” must be met.

Starting December 26, religious services, weddings and funerals will be limited to 10 people indoors or outdoors with physical distancing as long as we are in Lockdown (grey). Even for these smaller services the COVID-19 protocols need to be observed. Baptisms require the same controls. Parishes are strongly encouraged to livestream Masses during the lockdown.

Pastors and Parish Administrators are to inform Associate Pastors and priest collaborators of the changes starting December 26 regarding religious services.

It is encouraged that there be times when churches are open for private prayer; however, please remember that volunteers are needed for screening and disinfecting surfaces whenever the church is open.

Parishes are encouraged to continue to make the sacrament of Confession available while respecting the COVID-19 preventative measures.

In person indoor meetings or non-religious-service gatherings are not allowed during the time of lockdown.

Parish offices are to be closed to the public and working on a curbside model of service. Where possible, at the Pastor’s discretion, parish staff can work from home. Should pastors have any concerns about what impact this lockdown will have on their parish finances, for Ottawa please contact Carole Lemieux (clemieux@archottawa.ca or 613-738-5025 x 223) and for Cornwall please contact Tracy Cameron (tcameron@alexandria-cornwall.ca or 613-933-1138 x 23)

Should you have any questions, please contact the Chancery.

Thank you for your continued cooperation during these challenging days. Your collaboration in following these guidelines has kept people safe.