



# Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. John's, NL

## Message from the Archbishop

March 23, 2020

### **Re: Restrictions on Funeral Liturgies during the time of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Dear People of the Archdiocese of St. John's,

As the situation in our Archdiocese, our country and throughout the world continues to evolve regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic, further precautions against spreading the virus have become necessary. For this reason, out of pastoral concern for the health and wellbeing of all our people, and in consultation with the Archdiocesan Presbyteral Council, I am hereby providing our clergy with the following directives regarding funerals in this Archdiocese:

- ***Until future notice, due to the severe threat presented by the COVID-19 virus, the Clergy of the Archdiocese are not to preside at funeral liturgies in our churches or in funeral homes.***
- ***For the time being, the Clergy of the Archdiocese may preside at graveside prayer services with immediate family members of the deceased, it being understood that these services must be in keeping with government regulations regarding gathering sizes and social distancing.***
- ***The Clergy of the Archdiocese are encouraged to do all that they can to be available via telephone to help families struggling with the death of loved ones and to assist them in the planning of funeral liturgies to take place at a later date when it is deemed safe to do so.***
- ***I ask that the Clergy of the Archdiocese make this information available to parishioners on parish websites and parish messaging services.***

I realize that these are extraordinary measures, but given the present circumstances and concerns regarding the spreading of the coronavirus, they are measures that seem prudent and wise. However, during this time of necessary social distancing, it is more important than ever that the Church find ways to be personally present to parishioners and to all those seeking spiritual nourishment and support. As well as offering the celebration of the Mass and other devotions via social media, many of our clergy and parishes are reaching out to and responding to those in need through their food banks and other parish organizations and through telephone contacts and social media.

Asking that you join with me in praying for God's wisdom and grace for those who are charged with our public safety, for the sick, their families and the health care professionals that minister to them, and for the deceased, those who mourn their passing and those seeking to serve and console those who mourn, I remain,

Yours in Christ,

+Peter Hundt  
Archbishop of St. John's, NL