

Message from the Archbishop

March 16, 2020

Re: Precautions during the time of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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

Out of pastoral concern for the health and wellbeing of all our people, and in consultation with the Archdiocesan Presbyteral Council, I am hereby dispensing the people of the Archdiocese from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass until further notice. Furthermore, I am instructing that as of Wednesday March 17th, all regularly scheduled weekday and weekend Masses be cancelled until further notice.

I recommend that where possible our churches remain open to the public at their usual hours for the faithful to come for personal prayer, for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and for private devotions. Also, I encourage all of our priests to celebrate Mass privately on a daily basis and to continue to make themselves available for the personal pastoral care of their parishioners.

Regarding funerals and presently scheduled weddings and baptisms, for the time being, I recommend that decisions be made in consultation with the families involved and the following precautions be observed:

- Anyone with flu like symptoms and other serious symptoms of ill health should not attend;
- Numbers present should not be so great as to cause crowding and lack of personal space.
- Holy Water should be removed from all fonts;
- Holy Communion should not be received from the chalice;
- Holy Communion should not be received on the tongue;
- Ministers distributing Holy Communion should use hand sanitizer before and after the distribution of Holy Communion;
- The Sign of Peace should not be exchanged in ways involving physical contact.

Regarding parish social, catechetical and administrative gatherings and meetings, I recommend that decisions be made based on the preventive measures announced by our provincial health officials and in consultation with the groups involved.

During this time when we will be restricted from personally attending public liturgies and social gatherings, I ask that the information on these restrictions be made available to parishioners on parish websites and parish telephone messaging services. In addition, I encourage everyone to consider being united in prayer by tuning in to televised Masses, reading the Word of God using their Family Bible and by availing themselves of other devotional resources available on the internet.

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

Yours in Christ,

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