



Dear faithful of the Archdiocese of Toronto,

I pray you and your loved ones are safe as we navigate these challenging days in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

I also express my gratitude to our clergy and parish volunteers who have been doing so much to sustain the spiritual lives of parishioners across the archdiocese and who have ensured our churches are a safe gathering place for the faithful.

Once again, our communal life of faith has been restricted because of the

requirement to follow the strict health directives.

Last week, Premier Ford announced that the Province of Ontario would enter a state of emergency effective Thursday, January 14th, in an effort to address the increasing number of positive Covid-19 cases in the province.

In light of this announcement and other developments I would like to provide an update covering a number of important topics.

Sacramental Celebrations

The latest provincial restrictions do not have an impact on the current limit of 10 persons (including celebrant and those assisting with ministry) present inside a place of worship at any time. The current 'lockdown' measures relating to places of worship have been extended by the province until at least Thursday, February 11, 2021.

The province also instituted a 'stay-at-home order,' asking people to remain at home wherever possible, going outside of the home only for essential activities. These include shopping for groceries, medical appointments, exercise, etc.

It is our firm belief that spiritual sustenance is essential for the mental, spiritual and physical well-being of the faithful and the church offers essential support for many who are isolated or vulnerable. During this period of pandemic, churches in the archdiocese continue to offer livestream services and other creative outreach ministries for which I am most grateful.

Our churches, where they are able to do so safely, may continue to remain open for private prayer and, where feasible, to offer Holy Communion Services on weekends. Participation is limited to no more than 10 people inside the church at any given time.

At present, weddings and funerals are also limited to no more than 10 persons, including those presiding and assisting with the liturgy.

I further affirm that the faithful are dispensed from their Sunday obligation and that those who are symptomatic, have a compromised immune system or are at a greater risk of infection, should remain home.

Covid-19 Vaccine

We pray that the vaccination process that has recently commenced in Canada and around the world will greatly contribute to a swift end to the pandemic. We long for the day where, once again, we may return, without restrictions, to full and active participation in the Eucharist, the source and summit of our spiritual journey.

I encourage Catholics in the Archdiocese of Toronto to be vaccinated at the appropriate time, given the distribution plans outlined by the relevant authorities.

There have also been extensive discussions regarding the ethics of vaccine production and use for Catholics. In recommending Catholics be vaccinated as appropriate, we are guided by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute. Additional resources will soon be shared with clergy.

Preparation for Lent

In the coming days, I will be meeting with clergy to receive feedback on the current pastoral situation and to discuss how best to care for the faithful during the upcoming season of Lent. Further updates will be forthcoming.

Let Us Pray Together

Thank you for your steadfast faith and ongoing prayers during these very challenging days. I ask you especially to keep close in prayer the many elderly and vulnerable people who have succumbed to the Covid-19 virus, those who are sick and those who care for them. I recognize that the current restrictions are incredibly frustrating for all of us. Out of love for one another, we must make every effort to combat this deadly pandemic that has taken the lives of so many, both here at home and around the world.

May God continue to bless you now and always.

Sincerely in Christ,

+ Thomas Card. Collins

Thomas Cardinal Collins

Archbishop of Toronto

