

To: The People of the Diocese of Corner Brook and Labrador

From: Bishop Bart

Date: May 7th, 2020

Re: May 11, 2020 and Alert Level 4

Dear People of the Diocese:

The Newfoundland and Labrador Government has recently revealed plans for Alert Level 4 that are to begin on Monday, May 11th.

At Alert Level 4, everyone is still encouraged to stay at home, except for essential outings including exercise. People may choose to “double-bubble” (in a mutual agreement between two households), and public gatherings of ten or less people are allowed, as long as physical distancing can be maintained and the names of the people at any one gathering are taken down (in case contact tracing needs to take place). These gatherings include funerals, burials and weddings; wakes and visitations are excluded.

We now know that it is only at Alert Level 2 that “Places of worship are permitted to resume operations with restrictions”. I, therefore, ask you to keep the churches closed to the public and that you refrain from distributing communion except in the case of Viaticum. We will be working on a detailed list of directives/restrictions to submit to the Provincial Government to ensure that our plans are approved as soon as it is possible to open our doors safely.

The following directives apply for Alert Level 4 (beginning on May 11th):

1. All people of the diocese are dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass in person, but are strongly urged to attend a Catholic Mass of their choosing virtually.
2. All churches are to remain closed to the public. People may want to find some time each week and park their car and pray to these great houses of God’s presence.
3. Access to diocesan and parish offices are limited to staff and essential services only.
4. All diocesan and parish meetings involving non-staff should take place virtually (i.e. Finance and Pastoral Council, Marriage and Baptismal Preparation, etc.).
5. “Private” celebrations of funerals, weddings and “urgent” baptisms may take place in the church within the context of a liturgy of the Word (no Mass) provided that:
 - a) Reduce the numbers to as near to zero as possible (no more than 10, this includes clergy).
 - b) Safe distancing protocols are strictly enforced and care is taken to communicate the protocols clearly before the event takes.
 - c) Before the service begins, a list of attendees is secured (in case of contact tracing).
 - d) In the case of “urgent” baptisms, the celebrant wears a facemask for those parts where physical distancing cannot be maintained and wears gloves when performing the anointings.
 - e) The Sacrament of the Sick continues to be made available in urgent cases (observing all the necessary precautions) and the Sacrament of Reconciliation continues to be made available (while observing physical distancing).

I ask that you continue to remain in contact with your Parish and your fellow parishioners. Please offer your help, support and encouragement whenever you can. Our communities will stay healthy as long as we draw near to Christ and take responsibility for one another.

Fraternally in Christ, Bishop Bart van Roijen