



Diocese of Corner Brook and Labrador

March 18th, 2020

Re: Latest precautionary steps in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

After listening to the recommendations by both our Provincial and Federal Governments to practice “social distancing” and to avoid any unnecessary gatherings of people, and in consultation with College of Consultors of the Diocese and the Bishops of Atlantic Canada, I hereby dispense the people of the diocese from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass until such time as the present precautions are lifted and ask that all Masses (both weekend and weekdays), socials, meetings, catechetical activities and hall-based fundraisers (i.e. Bingos, Teas and Suppers) be cancelled until further notice. Outreach programs to the poor should follow tight pre-arranged delivery or pick-up protocol and should minimize or eliminate close contact between people.

In case of funerals and marriages all efforts must be made to work with the family to minimize the number of people to immediate family (staying below the maximum threshold of 50 set by our Provincial Government). The following precautions should also be made:

- Anyone who has travelled from outside the country in the last two weeks or experiencing flu-like symptoms should refrain from attending.
- Holy Water should be removed from all fonts.
- The seating area should be disinfected before and after the service. (songbooks should be removed from the pews).
- All Ministers (including the priest) should sanitize their hands prior to the service and prior to distributing communion.
- Holy Communion should not be received from the chalice.
- The sign of peace should not involve physical contact of any kind.
- People should be encouraged to observe social distancing.
- A door person to open the door for the guests.
- Other precautions that avoid the cross-contamination of surfaces.

I recommend that our churches be accessible to our parishioners for times of prayer, for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and for private devotions. Please make sure that appropriate disinfectant protocols are in place. I also urge all priests to celebrate daily Mass privately and to attend to the pastoral care of their parishioners and in making themselves available for confessions, always respecting the protocols set out by our health experts. I leave any decisions regarding parish staffing levels and working protocols according to the need and the discretion of each parish.

Though further instructions may be forthcoming in regards to the celebration of the Easter Triduum in our parishes, The Mass of Sacred Chrism, scheduled for Wednesday, April 1st, will be limited to the Bishop and the priests of the Corner Brook Parishes only. All other priests are encouraged to stay home; the study day scheduled for that same day is cancelled.

During this time of restrictions on public gatherings, I ask that you make this communique as widely available to your parishioners, be it on parish websites or parish telephone messaging services. The Diocese of Corner brook and Labrador will be live-streaming a Mass from Corner Brook starting on Sunday, March 22nd at 10:30 a.m. for all parishes around the diocese and will do the same with weekday Masses (check out our diocesan website: rchurch.com for updated information). Please make sure to include information regarding televised Masses on Salt and Light (saltandlight.org/schedule) and E.W.T.N. (<https://video.ewtn.com/daily-mass> or YouTube) as well as life-streaming from the Basilica in St. John's, NL (<https://www.thebasilica.net> (it has a live Streaming Button)). Parishioners are also encouraged to read the Sunday Readings from their Sunday Missals and to consult the internet for worthy Catholic readings and devotionals.

Please be attentive to the needs of those who may need extra time and attention during this difficult and stressful time. Make every effort not to communicate these directives as absolutes or to create an impression of distance with your parishioners. Though it is important to keep our protocols current and in keeping with what is being asked of us, it is equally important that we do everything to lighten the load that others may be carrying. Pray for those who are on the front lines of our health care systems and for all those who are most vulnerable or suffering from illness. Lent is a time of fasting, prayer and acts of charity. Keeping these age-old practices in mind, let us not fail in practicing them with utmost care.

Fraternally in Christ,



Bishop Bart van Roijen

Diocese of Corner Brook and Labrador

