



**Roman Catholic Diocese of Peterborough**

December 7, 2020

*Memorial of St. Ambrose*

Dear Clergy, Religious and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Peterborough,

As the season of Advent progresses, it is a time of longing and expectation like no other. We continue to pray for health, wellbeing, and a return to normal life, but we know that the COVID-19 pandemic will be with us for a while still.

Since the re-opening of our churches in June we have worked diligently as clergy and parishioners, in partnership with public health officials, to implement our Worship Safe guidelines and ensure the health and welfare of our people. I wish to thank you for your patience and your diligent efforts in this regard. They have allowed our parishes to promote the spiritual lives of the faithful while also attending to their physical health. As Catholics, we follow the prudent restrictions that are outlined in these protocols as a matter of good citizenship and as an exercise of our faith. Moreover, they help us to fulfill the obligations of charity and justice toward our neighbour.

While a certain amount of pandemic fatigue is understandable, it is important for all of us to redouble our efforts to follow the *Worship Safe* protocols. The Assembly of Ontario Bishops Worship Safe Committee has recently released some enhanced protocols to ensure the wellbeing of the people who come to our churches. This is important as we head into the winter months and as we are seeing a great surge in the number of cases in our province. We must be diligent about wearing masks at church and continue to practice safe physical distancing – at least 2 meters if not in the same household. This allows us to have confidence in each other and assures the civil authorities that we are being responsible in what we are doing to follow public health guidelines here in our Diocese.

With the recent, dramatic increase in the number of cases in our province, I wish to reaffirm our stated policy on the reception of Communion. Holy Communion must be received on the hand rather than the tongue during this time. While reception on the tongue remains

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normative in our Church, it is good to recall that the practice of receiving on the hand is an ancient and venerable one. As long ago as the 4th century, St. Cyril of Jerusalem wrote, “In approaching therefore, come not with your wrists extended or your fingers spread; but make your left hand a throne for the right, as for that which is to receive a King.” I am aware that this is a sensitive matter for some. Canon law reminds us that the exercise of our rights in the Church must take account of the common good and our duty toward others (C. 223 §1). Therefore, I ask that those whose practice is to receive Holy Communion on the tongue, set aside this right for the sake of others. This practice of charity and fraternity will be an expression of who we are as the Church.

It is also important that physical distancing be maintained during the procession for Holy Communion and that masks be worn – they are to be removed at the moment of reception using the straps, without touching the front of the mask.

I thank you for your attention to and cooperation with these protocols which have been implemented for the wellbeing of all who come to our churches. With you, I pray for an end to this pandemic with the hopes that we might return to a more typical celebration of the Mass sometime in 2021.

May God bless you abundantly in this joyful Advent and Christmas time, and may you and your family members be safe and well.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Daniel Miehm". The signature is written in a cursive style.

†Most Reverend Daniel J. Miehm  
Bishop of Peterborough

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