



STATEMENT REGARDING THE PROVINCIAL SHUTDOWN

December 22, 2020

To the clergy, staff and faithful of the Diocese of Peterborough,

Yesterday, Premier Ford announced that those areas of the province not currently in lockdown will be moving to this status as of 12:01 a.m. on the morning of December 26, 2020. While we are relieved to be able to gather for the celebration of Christmas, it is unfortunate to have to deal with further limitations on our churches, especially after carefully adhering to safety precautions for many months.

On Christmas Eve and Day, our parishes will welcome the faithful at 30% capacity for Masses, following the strict protocols of *Worship Safe*. Beginning on December 26, there will be a limit of no more than 10 people inside our churches at any given time. Regrettably, this will mean a temporary suspension of the public celebration of the Mass: the accompanying document spells out the nature of the limitations that will be in force.

Most of our Diocese will be impacted by the 28-day lockdown applicable to Southern Ontario, while our parishes in the North Bay – Parry Sound Regional Health District will be subject to the 14-day lockdown. It may be difficult to regard those timelines as firm, since it seems that much will depend on the trend line of COVID-19 cases in our province.

I thank all clergy, staff, and faithful for their cooperation and understanding as we face this extraordinary public health crisis. I also wish to express gratitude to those who have been working diligently throughout this pandemic to keep our parishioners safe when they attend our churches, and to those who have provided inspiring pastoral care and outreach in our communities.

As we prepare for the celebration of our Lord's birth, we pray for all those who are sick, those who have died and the front-line workers caring for those most in need. Let us hold one another in prayer during these difficult days, confident in God's love made visible for us at the Lord's Nativity.

Yours in Christ,

†Most Reverend Daniel J. Miehms
Bishop of Peterborough

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PROVINCIAL SHUTDOWN

- The provincial shutdown will extend from December 26, 2020 until January 23, 2021 for parishes and missions in the southern region of the Diocese, and from December 26, 2020 to January 9, 2021 for parishes and missions¹ served by the North Bay-Parry Sound District Health Unit.
- Attendance inside the church is limited to 10 people, including the priest and a staff member/volunteer required to monitor capacity restrictions. Due to these measures, public Masses must be temporarily suspended. The faithful are dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. Priests will celebrate private Mass daily for the intentions of parishioners and for those suffering from COVID-19.
- Churches will be open on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation for periods of private prayer and devotion and, at the pastor's discretion, churches may be open for periods of private prayer and devotion on weekdays. Churches may be opened for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, weddings, funerals and baptisms, with attendance restricted to 10 persons including those involved in the ministry (priest, cantor, etc.) All health precautions are to be observed.
- Parishioners are encouraged to view online/livestream/televised Masses. A full list is available on the website of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Peterborough. The Sunday Masses continue to be taped and available on the YouTube channel for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Peterborough.
(https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_Cd0rFPwUxMtMRhS_UtCvg/videos)
- No meetings should take place in parish halls or other church spaces at this time. Only those organizations deemed as essential services such as Alcoholics Anonymous, etc. may meet in person if needed. These meetings should be restricted to 10 people and ensure that all appropriate health and safety measures are in place (use of masks, hand sanitizer, physical distancing, etc.). Virtual meetings should replace in-person meetings wherever possible.

¹ St. Joseph Parish, Powassan; St. John Mission, Nipissing; St. Patrick Parish, Kearney; Holy Spirit Mission, Burk's Falls; St. Peter the Apostle Parish, Parry Sound; Mission of St. Peter, (Killbear) Nobel; Sacred Heart Parish, Trout Creek; St. Augustine Mission, South River; St. Mary Mission, Port Loring; Holy Family Parish, Britt; St. Therese Mission, Pointe au Baril; St. Michael Mission, Rosseau.