



Roman Catholic Diocese of Peterborough

March 13, 2020

Dear sisters and brothers in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Peterborough,

The rapidly evolving situation of the COVID-19 virus around the world has been a challenge to government leaders, health care professionals, educators and families. It has also presented challenges to faith communities and their leaders as we determine the proper way to respond to this crisis while serving the spiritual needs of our members.

In the Diocese of Peterborough, we have provided two updates regarding liturgical practices and hygiene protocols to ensure the safety and wellbeing of parishioners: one update was released just this morning. It is, however, a rapidly changing situation.

The Chief Medical Officer of the Province of Ontario has advised that all public gatherings of more than 250 people should be cancelled at this time. As many of our weekend Eucharistic celebrations will exceed this number, I direct that **all** our Catholic parishes cancel public Mass for the faithful this weekend. After some consideration, it was decided that the closure of only our larger parishes would not be feasible. It would be too difficult to predict congregation sizes at parishes that remained open, if such a system of partial closure were implemented.

We will assess this situation in advance of next weekend and beyond for as long as this pandemic impacts our province. For this weekend and for any other that may be affected, I dispense the faithful from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. Churches should remain open for private prayer and Eucharistic adoration. I wish to emphasize that daily Mass will continue during the week. Weddings and funerals, likewise, will continue to be celebrated: pastors should confer with families about ways to control the number of participants at these liturgies.

We hope and pray that this period of suspension of Sunday Mass will be brief. As our nation and world face this health crisis, let us keep in prayer all those impacted by the corona virus, public officials, health care workers and all those labouring to bring healing and wellbeing.

Yours in Christ,

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Bishop of Peterborough

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