

COVID-19 UPDATE FROM BISHOP FABBRO

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The following directives, which include the temporary suspension of all public Masses in our diocese and restrictions on the celebration of the other sacraments, will be hard on all of us. The Eucharist and the sacraments are the very heart of our Catholic faith. After consulting with public health officials, however, we decided that it is our responsibility as citizens to work together with others in our communities to take measures to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and to care for those who are sick and most vulnerable as a result of this virus.

We are making these sacrifices out of charity and for the sake of the common good.

I encourage all our faithful to be to be vigilant about personal cleanliness and keeping appropriate distances from others.

Our priests, deacons, lay pastoral ministers, and our faithful are reaching out to those in need at this difficult time, especially those who are elderly, vulnerable and isolated. I am very grateful to all of you.

This Lenten season, we are united in prayer for those who are suffering from COVID-19 and for those who are caring for them.

May God have mercy on us! May Mary, Help of Christians, intercede for us!

1. The Celebration of Mass

- a) All Masses and services, including missions and devotions, will be suspended at least until April 30. All churches are to be closed.
- b) Priests are encouraged to celebrate Mass privately each day for the intentions of their parishioners, for the medical personnel assisting the sick, and for an end to the outbreak. In this time of fasting from the Eucharist, parishioners should be encouraged to pray for other parishioners and all those affected by the virus.
- c) Funeral Masses and luncheons are not permitted. The Rite of Committal may be celebrated at the cemetery with immediate family members present. Funeral Masses may be celebrated at a later date.
- d) It is recommended that any weddings already scheduled be delayed. If they proceed, they are to be limited to immediate family members only, up to the number of people allowed at a gathering as determined by the local health officials.
- e) Baptisms are to be postponed until further notice.
- f) The Mass of Chrism will be celebrated privately by me, with Bishop Dabrowski and some members of the Episcopal Council. The oils for the celebrations of the sacraments will be made available at the deanery level following that Mass, at a date to be determined.

2. Confessions

- a) All Confessions are cancelled, except in the case of danger of death.
- b) The Day of Confessions is cancelled.

3. Care of the Sick and the Dying

- a) Priests are to be mindful of the sick, especially those in danger of death.
- b) Priests, deacons, and pastoral workers are to follow visiting restrictions set by the individual hospitals and healthcare facilities.
- c) The Eucharist will not be taken to parishioners who are homebound. Instead, parish teams are encouraged to ask volunteers to keep in contact with these people through telephone calls or other electronic means. Such calls could be a simple chat or praying a decade of the Rosary with the person.

4. Parish Offices and Activities

- a) Parish offices should be closed to the public. Where possible, staff can work from home, while some staff will report to work and deal with parishioners' needs by phone or electronic means. This applies also to our Diocesan Centre, the Marriage Tribunal, and the Refugee Office.
- b) Appointments in parish offices should be limited to essential matters. Where possible, meetings should be held by electronic means.
- c) All regular meetings and social activities in parishes are cancelled. This includes cessation of all meetings for sacramental preparation. Parents are to be encouraged to continue such preparation in the home. Celebrations of First Confession, First Communion, and Confirmation will proceed only when the danger of the virus is passed. No child should be denied the sacraments due to the cessation of these preparation meetings.
- d) Meetings for 12-Step programs may be exempt from this, depending on the direction of local health officials.
- e) It is highly recommended, with this lull in activities, that parish staff could reach out by telephone or electronic means to connect with all parishioners to offer prayers and support.

5. Resources

- a) An Outreach page is being continually updated on the diocesan website and has a link on the homepage. The page contains resources for the faithful including online Masses, articles, links to Catholic publishers and activities for children, youth and families. Please promote this Outreach page as widely as

possible: <https://dol.ca/outreach>.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Most Reverend Ronald P. Fabbro, C.S.B.
Bishop of London