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Catholic Response to COVID-19



March 23, 2020

Dear faithful of the Archdiocese of Toronto,

I am sending you this message as part of our effort to keep the Catholic community informed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this crisis some aspects of our communal life of faith must, temporarily, be restricted severely, because of our responsibility to follow strictly the health directives that are necessary to protect the community, and basically because of our concern to follow Our Lord's commandment to love our neighbour. It is vital, however, that our Christian life grow ever stronger in this painful time when so many are suffering. I am encouraged by initiatives already put into action by our clergy and laity, for example:

- Parishioners and clergy are deepening their love of God through increased private prayer, and family prayer, and prayerful meditation on the Bible and spiritual sources. The shock of this crisis reminds us of our mortality, and of our need for prayer.
- Many pastors and lay leaders are sharing spiritual readings and reflections via email and parish website posts, and common social media tools, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. People are meeting through the internet for apostolic purposes.
- Parishioners are showing love of neighbour by organizing greater outreach efforts to assist others with the new challenges of daily life — groceries, prescription medications, and necessary medical appointments.
- Several parishes are implementing friendly calling programs where parishioners are telephoning elderly people and those with special needs.
- Pastors are also reaching out directly, by phone, to as many parishioners as they can to offer spiritual support. Many are sharing their contact information so that parishioners can contact their pastor by phone or email.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, whose ultimate celebrant is Jesus, will continue to be celebrated privately every day by the priests of the Archdiocese for the intentions of the people, for which they are also called to dedicate their praying of the Divine Office throughout the day, and their daily Holy Hour of Eucharistic adoration. In view of the new public health directives, however, and because of our need to act responsibly and to show love of neighbour, on March 17 I took the extreme step of cancelling all public Masses for the duration of this extreme health emergency. I pray that the stringent measures that must now be taken to combat this pandemic will allow us to return, as soon as is possible, to our normal celebration of the sacraments, and our community life.

Meanwhile, each morning, during this crisis, I will celebrate Mass at 7:30 a.m. in St Michael's Cathedral Basilica, followed by the Angelus and the Rosary. This Mass is live-streamed so that the faithful can at least participate in that way. A link to this is found on the Archdiocesan website [The Mass](#), where one can also find a link to the Daily Mass and Sunday Mass celebrated at Loretto Abbey.

Your best source of information about our archdiocesan response to the pandemic is this website: www.archtoronto.org/covid19. There you will find information about participation in the Sacraments, sacramental programs and other aspects of ongoing parish life. You will also find information about how you can support your parish through electronic [Donations](#) like Pre-Authorized Giving (PAG), credit card and delivering (or mailing) your weekly envelope to the parish. In addition to keeping you informed through that website, the archdiocese will continue to share periodic communication, like this message, via email.

We pray for those who are sick, and for those who care for them, and also for those whose livelihood is endangered in this crisis. Especially in this time of increased isolation and tribulation, it is all the more essential that our life in Christ be lived fully, even though our public activities are necessarily restricted for a time.

This great crisis has come suddenly upon us. It challenges us, as crisis always does, to put aside complacency and to grow deeper in our love of God and love of neighbour. May God bless us all, and give us the grace to do just that.

In Christ,
+ Thomas Card. Collins
Thomas Cardinal Collins
Archbishop of Toronto

