



Archevêque de Montréal

Pastoral Letter :

Care for: Body, Heart and Soul

March 13, 2020

Dear People of God in Montreal,

For several months now, we have found ourselves in a state of growing concern and heightened worry regarding the health of those already infected by the COVID-19 virus. To face this challenge, we need to maintain solidarity, take proper care of our body, without forgetting our heart and soul.

Take care of the body by following all personal hygiene measures, especially hand-washing.

Take care of the heart by continuing to acknowledge those whom we meet, in ways other than by shaking hands. It is important to avoid isolating people; we need to keep in touch in a visible way or through any of the many communication means available.

Take care of the soul by praying at home, with the family, in small groups, at church.

With regard to parish churches, there are two cancellations for the moment: Saturday evening and Sunday masses, whose congregations include many people who travel, and catechesis, which keeps young people and their families moving in the same direction.

That being the case, it is also recommended that parish churches remain open seven days a week, and that all other events, and pastoral and liturgical activities, take place according to the good judgment of the priests and their parish teams.

Individuals, families and small groups are welcome to come to church during Sunday Mass hours and also whenever the church doors are normally open.

During Sunday Mass hours, it is recommended that parishes keep their church doors open, have greeters on hand to welcome people, possibly offer an opportunity to dialogue, and make the Sacrament of Reconciliation available. It is recommended that exposition of the Blessed Sacrament be arranged to facilitate prayer, and that Communion be available, in accordance with our guidelines on hygiene, paying attention not to touch the hand or the tongue.

People at risk are encouraged to stay at home and to follow Sunday Mass on television or via the Internet. Everyone can access Salt + Light TV until April 14 through Videotron, on channel 242, and through Bell, on channel 654. Mass will be broadcasted on Sunday at 8:30 a.m. Sunday Mass is also broadcast on Radio-Canada at 10 a.m. year-round.

Seniors residences and religious convents/houses, with the consent of the management or superior and following the pastoral judgment of the priest and his team, can celebrate Sunday masses, but these are not open to the public. Remember to observe the 250-person

limit set by the government.

Regarding the financial impact, we recommend that the required staff continue to be remunerated. We will see how best to organize a solidarity campaign to address the possible revenue shortfall in parishes.

This message does not address all questions. Other messages will be issued in response to changes in the public-health situation and to deal with various concerns or upcoming events, such as Holy Week.

However, everything in parish life continues, except for what has been cancelled. Saturday evening/Sunday masses and catechesis in parishes are cancelled until further notice. Therefore, weekday masses, baptisms, funerals and weddings can take place, as long as the required 250-person limit is observed. For the rest, we place full confidence in the judgment of the pastors and their parish team.

Let us honour Sunday and rediscover the Lord's Day. Let our sadness in not going to Sunday Mass be an offering that helps us to appreciate this celebration when it returns. Let us continue to visit those who are struggling with illness.

During this time of Lent, leading to Easter, let us not forget that Jesus Christ continually draws near to us. Let us remain tuned in to prayer, solidarity and prevention. Let us ask God for the grace to remain serene, ready to respect others and filled with hope.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Christian Lépine". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

† Christian Lépine
Archevêque de Montréal