

**COMMUNIQUÉ No. 21 – October 29, 2020
INFORMATION**

To Pastors, Pastoral Teams and Religious Communities

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The pandemic continues to generate new challenges that must be faced, particularly since the government has announced that measures imposed in the “red zone” are to be extended until November 23. The following information, along with several recommendations, applies to the upcoming period.

1. Meetings of Parishioners, election of churchwardens during the pandemic

A. Election of churchwardens during the pandemic

According to the guidelines issued by the board representing the chancellors of Quebec, the following recommendations and reminders are offered concerning the election of churchwardens during the pandemic:

- 1) The Act Respecting Fabriques requires that the election of churchwardens take place at a Meeting of Parishioners duly convened six working days before the date on which the election is to be held.
- 2) This Meeting of Parishioners must be held during the last two months of the fiscal year of the Fabrique, which is normally December 31.
- 3) For the Meeting of Parishioners to be valid, a minimum of 10 parishioners must be present to constitute a quorum. On the other hand, parishioners must not be deprived of participating in the election of churchwardens by limiting the number of those admitted to 25 persons (cf. Sections 35 and 49, the Act Respecting Fabriques).
- 4) The Act Respecting Fabriques does not provide for the possibility of holding a Meeting of Parishioners via telephone conference or videoconference or of voting by mail. Neither does the Act prohibit these possibilities; however, the complexity of the deliberations and especially of the voting process are not conducive to holding such meetings.
- 5) The Bishop is not empowered to extend the mandate of a churchwarden whose term of three years is ending. However, the mandate of a churchwarden extends until the latter has been replaced (cf. Section 38).

Consequently, following legal advice and in the spirit of the Act, a Meeting of Parishioners must be convened before the end of the year 2020, even if it turns out later that the meeting must be postponed. Given the recent government directives, the date chosen to hold the meeting must be after November 23.

To this end, remember that the notice convening the meeting must be made in one of the following manners: the notice may be read during Sunday Masses or may be affixed to the door of the church or published in a weekly bulletin for parishioners and available in the church.

If, in the course of the coming weeks, an announcement is made that the restrictions regarding places of worship in our region for the month of December continue to limit the maximum number of participants to 25, it will then be possible to postpone the meeting until a date within the first 60 days of 2021. It will be necessary, at that point, to inform the parish of this postponement as soon as possible, giving at least several days’ notice prior to the scheduled date.

If you are nevertheless considering holding a Meeting of Parishioners in the “red zone” by videoconference, please speak first with your episcopal vicar.

B. Approval of loan

Moreover, those parishes that applied for the \$40,000 loan, to be reimbursed in whole or in part by 2022, should ask parishioners to approve the loan at this meeting, which is necessary since the term of this loan extends beyond one year. This agenda item should be included in the notice issued to convene the meeting.

2. Best procedures for managing cases of infection

We are glad to report that there has not, as yet, been any outbreak in our places of worship. However, some parishes have found themselves in situations in which individuals had participated in a parish event, unaware at the time that they had contracted the virus.

The **following directives** outline how best to proceed when a person (parishioner, volunteer or anyone else) who has participated in a meeting or a pastoral activity in your place of worship (church, oratory, shrine, chapel, etc.) is found to have contracted the virus:

- a) The person infected with COVID-19 must go into quarantine: “confinement” for 14 days;
- b) The person in charge of implementing the public-health instructions must consult the attendance log of participants at the event where the infected person was present in the place of worship or in adjoining rooms;
- c) The person responsible must call all the other people who were present at the gathering at the same time that the person diagnosed with COVID-19 was also present;
- d) All persons appearing in the log must be on the alert for any symptoms linked with COVID (for example, coughing, fever, loss of sense of taste or smell). These symptoms can appear within three to five days, sometimes taking as long as 14 days!
- e) If a person detects any of these symptoms, he or she must contact the appropriate local public-health authorities and comply with their instructions;
- f) If the test results are negative, the person must, nonetheless, remain in quarantine for 14 days.

With respect to **ventilation in churches** during the cold weather season, we wish to remind you that an excellent PowerPoint document prepared by Ms. Marie Hatem, a member of the Diocesan “Deconfinement” Committee, can be found on the diocesan website. We encourage you to read it at: <http://bit.ly/Ventilating>

3. GENERAL APPEAL: chairpersons needed for Fabrique meetings

For several years, a number of parishes in our diocese have been facing mounting administrative challenges (finance, buildings, human resources, etc.). Another obstacle presents itself when a Fabrique looking within its own community is unable to gather around the table all the skills needed to address these complex situations.

Pastors and churchwardens appreciate knowing that they can rely on the presence **of a person with experience**, who has been appointed by the Archbishop after a consultation process, to preside at meetings of the Fabrique. This person, who need not be a churchwarden, may reside outside the parish boundaries where he or she is assuming this role. Promoting the sense of responsibility and involvement of everyone, the chairperson works in a short-, medium- or long-term capacity to assist the Fabrique in recovering its administrative “well-being” and conducting its affairs efficiently.

The department of Administrative Services to Fabriques, in association with the episcopal vicars and other diocesan services, offers several training opportunities for Fabrique members. The department is currently developing a more specific **training and coaching program for chairpersons and administrative assistants**.

The time has come, therefore, to launch **AN APPEAL TO EVERYONE**, in a **spirit of solidarity among the parishes**:

- We are seeking experienced men and women who are capable of taking on the task of presiding at Fabrique meetings. They will receive training and support from the Archdiocese. They may, for instance, have previously been members of a Fabrique or have some professional experience in management.
- **If you know someone who fits this profile** and who could devote some time to assisting certain parishes in our diocese that are struggling, I would be grateful if you would let us know : vg@diocesemontreal.org.
- In these uncertain times, the need is real and receiving a response to this appeal is all the more urgent.

4. Sacramental celebrations

a) To postpone or to hold certain sacramental celebrations: the need for discernment

In Communiqué No. 20, dated October 1, I invited you to postpone marriages, baptisms, first Communion (and first reconciliations) and confirmations. Rather than a strict prohibition, this was an appeal to our sense of civic responsibility, given that Quebec as a whole was asked to make an effort.

For the period now beginning and continuing until November 23, the need for discernment remains in force. **It is still strongly recommended that scheduled sacramental celebrations be postponed**. This is one way to avoid occasions conducive to the propagation of the virus. Moreover, a celebration that brings together a greater number of participants provides a better opportunity for the faithful to experience the communal dimension of the sacraments. Waiting until we return to the “orange zone” before celebrating a sacrament will also give families the opportunity to come together and provide a true festive ambience to these important moments in the believers’ life of faith.

Nonetheless, if, after having exercised discernment and consulted the families involved, you consider that an exception is required for the sake of the faithful and that a celebration of baptism, marriage, first Communion or confirmation should go forward, be sure to comply with the instructions in force and remind the participants that, for the time being, it is still not possible to extend the celebration at the church following the liturgy or to gather the family together afterwards.

I would remind you that the maximum number of participants at a celebration in the “red zone” is set at **25 persons at the gathering, not including those leading the liturgical celebration** (priest, cantors, musicians, altar servers, ushers) **and that each member of a family counts as an individual person**.

b) Clarification on the question of the Sacrament of Confirmation

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, in response to the request for clarification concerning certain questions arising in relation to the administration of the Sacrament of Confirmation in the context of the current pandemic, has explained that **the potential use by the minister of any instruments (gloves, cotton balls, etc.) does not affect the validity of the sacrament**.

5. Catechetical sessions

I would remind you that, everywhere catechesis is offered during this pandemic period, it is of utmost importance to maintain contact with the families in our parishes, whether or not they have chosen to participate in a session this fall. With respect to the period from now until November 23, the situation requires that **no classroom catechism sessions be held**. Parishes that can offer virtual sessions may, however, continue to do so.

6. Hybrid pastoral approach

A team comprising members of diocesan offices and services (Youth Ministry, Office for Cultural and Ritual Communities, Office for Faith Education, Office for English Pastoral Services and the Responsible Pastoral Ministry Service) is offering training sessions using a hybrid pastoral approach. These sessions present a variety of practical tools to explore how to accompany others using a hybrid approach, and they explain how these tools can be employed in our work for the mission. The next sessions will be held:

ENGLISH – Wednesday, November 4, 6:30 p.m.: <http://bit.ly/HybridMinistry>

FRENCH – Wednesday, November 4, 8 p.m.: <http://bit.ly/PastoHybride>

7. Advent – Christmas

Many people are quite rightly wondering what can be done for the Advent season and Christmas celebrations. At the moment, it is difficult to foresee how we will be able to celebrate this high point at the beginning of the liturgical season. We intend to hold a consultation soon, inviting people to share their ideas. Diocesan guidelines will also be forthcoming in a future communiqué.

8. Day of renewal on November 21 with Archbishop Paul-André Durocher: Called by *My Name*, Sent in *His Name*

Open to everyone, this videoconference is intended for all those who desire to engage dynamically in the mission, specifically pastors, deacons, pastoral teams (pastoral workers, PCLs and catechists), pastoral councils, churchwardens, parish staff, ministry leaders and volunteers, members of consecrated life.

I strongly encourage you to participate in this event. Details can be found at:

ENGLISH - OUTWARD-BOUND : http://bit.ly/PVC2020_OutwardBound

FRENCH - EN SORTIE: https://bit.ly/PVC2020_EnSortie

Let us continue on this mission with which the Lord has entrusted us in patience and with mercy. Let us pray for one another!

In Jesus, our Hope,



+ Alain Faubert, VG
Auxiliary Bishop of Montreal