

June 2, 2020

“DECONFINEMENT” PROTOCOL FOR THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MONTREAL
Phase I: “Opening church doors”
For Parishes – Missions – Chapels – Oratories – Sanctuaries

June 2020

INTRODUCTION

Plagued for several months now by the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is beginning to prepare, with anticipated hope, for a return to normal life. However, it requires patience, a degree of restraint, and must proceed gradually. The Church at the diocesan level faces the same challenge and, in addition to carefully planning a “deconfinement” strategy, also wants its Christian communities to be well prepared so that when the time comes, they can proceed with the gradual resumption of liturgical and pastoral activity, according to the following schedule and in compliance with the government-issued directives, adapted to check the progress of the epidemic.

PHASE I: Opening church doors for individual, personal prayer. Church doors may be opened to welcome the faithful for personal prayer, adoration the Blessed Sacrament or to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation. Meanwhile, Mass celebrations and other pastoral ministries, through digital technology, should continue to be offered virtually.

PHASE II: Events held “in camera”

While maintaining PHASE I-level of operations, liturgical and pastoral activities may be offered “in camera” (privately), in compliance with the general and specific public-health conditions in force.

PHASE III: Open events, with restricted access

While maintaining PHASE I-level of operations, it will be possible to offer public liturgical and pastoral activities, but limiting the number of participants to the maximum set by government norms, in compliance with the general and specific public-health conditions in force.

PHASE IV: A return to regular pastoral and liturgical life

While continuing to offer online options for some celebrations and other pastoral activities, all services and activities that operated before confinement may resume.

To proceed through these different phases, both patience and, above all, strict adherence to the guidelines applicable to each stage of “deconfinement” are absolutely necessary. Various places of worship within the diocese (i.e. parishes, missions, chapels, oratories, etc.) will soon receive the "Diocesan Guidelines" issued by the Archbishop, and the "Implementation Guide" to facilitate the “deconfinement” process successfully within the Archdiocese of Montreal.

Phase I: “Opening church doors”

What conditions are required before churches can reopen their doors to parishioners, ensuring the observance of hygienic and distancing measures at all times?

Before opening their doors, churches must be well equipped to:

1. On site

- Clean the frequently touched surfaces within the church building, both prior to opening and regularly afterwards, i.e.: pews, ramps, and all other surfaces likely to spread infection.
- Remove all commonly used hymnals and booklets from public places.
- Keep all holy water fonts empty.
- Prohibit the lighting of all votive and other candles.
- Make the following items available to visitors: disposable gloves, masks, disinfecting wipes, garbage cans or waste bins with lids.
- Place hand sanitizer dispensers at the entrance of the church.
- Set up clear signage and markings - along the church floors and walls – to provide direction for foot traffic, ensuring that the required two-metre safety distance is respected.
- Clearly identify permitted seating areas (respecting the required two-metre distance);
- If pews are to remain unoccupied, indicate this clearly or simply close off access (with barricade tape, rope, etc.).
- Close off access to the sanctuary and areas where the faithful are likely to congregate.
- Make the safety instructions available to all those visiting the church, emphasizing the need to respect these measures.

2. Material resources

It is essential for the church to have the following required materials in place before announcing its opening:

- A supply of disinfectant wipes and products;
- Signage and instruction handouts;
- Indicate safety distances along church floors, pews, etc. using adhesive markings;
- Barricade tape to mark off restricted areas within the building;
- Disposable tissues;

- Waste bins with lids, lined with garbage bags;
- Etc.

It is strongly recommended that the organization furnish an adequate supply of gloves and masks for its volunteers and personnel.

3. Instructions for visiting

Instructions must be clearly communicated, ideally through standard pictorial language (picture-based instructions), and can be publicized via posters, emails, flyer handouts, etc.

3.a. Instructions for the protection of individuals

- If feverish or ill, refrain from visiting the church.
- Wear a mask, AT ALL TIMES, OUT OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY, strongly recommended and the preferred practice.
- Wear gloves: strongly recommended but not obligatory; if you choose to wear gloves, it is MANDATORY to put them on prior to entry, at the church entrance.
- If you need to cough: keep your mask on or cough into your elbow.
- Hand disinfection upon entering the church is MANDATORY.
- In cases when gloves are not used, hands should also be disinfected upon leaving the premises.
- Dispose of used protective materials in the bin, situated at the church exit, or better yet, at home.
- Avoid unnecessary touching of objects on the premises, i.e. statues, pictures, etc., as well as pews, tables, door handles, etc.
- Observe the restrictions regarding the maximum number of people permitted in the church at any given time.

3.b. Instructions for the collective protection of the public

In addition to the instructions mentioned above for the protection of individuals:

- Observe, at all times, adequate physical distancing with visitors and other people on the premises.

3.c. Other general instructions

To receive any service or a sacrament on an individual basis, one must make an appointment in advance.

4. Volunteers

It will be necessary to have volunteers available on the premises during opening hours to ensure that the flow of visitors respects the health-safety measures in place. Training should be provided to them and a rotation schedule organized to equip volunteers properly to:

- **Observe all hygiene measures and be given the means to enforce them:**
 - The wearing of masks;
 - The wearing of gloves;
 - Hand disinfection, the safe disposal of used safety items;

- Proper cleaning/disinfection of the premises and any objects manually handled during church visits;
- Etc.
- **Observe physical distancing throughout the following:**
 - The set-up for foot traffic on the premises;
 - The arrangement for seating in the pews and the set-up for waiting lines.
- **Ensure the cleanliness** of the premises and the objects manually handled during church visits.
- **Ensure application** of the “deconfinement” measures.
- **Assure adherence** to these measures in a pastoral way, rooted in Christian charity and adopting a positive approach.

5. Ministry support (Priests, Deacons, Ministry Leaders, Volunteers)

During opening hours, it will be necessary to have spiritual support and ministry available onsite, to welcome any faithful seeking individual prayer, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the sacrament of Reconciliation, etc. Everyone involved in providing such ministry and/support are asked to:

- Ensure that public-health measures are observed and properly carried out.
- Work with the Episcopal Vicar and/or fellow members of the deanery **in order that** parishes, within the same territory, might develop a common pastoral approach given the restrictions regarding the number of visitors permissible at any one time.

Committee members:

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