



Archbishop of Montreal

Pastoral Letter :

The spiritual, always essential

June 11, 2020

While the easing of restrictions regarding outdoor gatherings and the gradual resumption of activity in many sectors have sparked renewed hope in the general public, a cloud of uncertainty still hangs heavy over many facets of life: personal, family, social and religious.

The government and public-health officials are proceeding with caution, rightly so. However, I must draw attention to the impact the closure of places of worship has had on the lives of many individuals and families.

The pastoral team of the Archdiocese of Montreal is in touch daily with many people, those who believe and those who do not, seeking spiritual support. Deprived of access to their usual social and community surroundings, they describe feelings of being lost and a drift.

People searching for meaning, peace and strength seek to recover their equilibrium in a tranquil space, such as a church offers; or they express a need for accompaniment, which, as a starting point, is being met through social media and online services, but it can never replace direct physical contact with one's faith community.

Those gripped by grief long for an event, even with limitations imposed, where prayer is offered and, at the same time, their sorrow eased. When a loved one approaches death or dies, whenever that moment occurs, it always entails suffering and grief. During this pandemic, this suffering is compounded by conditions that make it difficult to be at the bedside of someone whom we love and who is approaching the end of life. Add to this the restrictions governing how we gather to mourn.

Still others, who had prepared to be married, to celebrate a milestone that will enhance and transform their lives, have seen their public commitment of love put on hold. They have dealt with it by postponing their wedding ceremony and reception, but it is no less of a trial that is no less upsetting.

We understand and share the urgent concern to protect public health. Again, we express our appreciation for the crucial role that governments have played during this public-health emergency. Still, we want to draw attention to the suffering of those struggling to find meaning in life, dealing with grief, wrestling with deferred marriage plans. They need a compassionate response.

With that in mind, we want to underline the need to recognize the importance of the spiritual dimension, which is integral to the human person. Let us not underestimate the importance of the spiritual life as a source of inner peace and strength to help us calmly and courageously face the challenges arising from this pandemic and other hardships.

We sincerely hope that through the experience of the pandemic, we become acutely aware that attention to the spiritual is essential. We need to consider all the dimensions of each individual, and the reciprocal relationship that binds body, mind, heart and soul.

We are constantly being asked the question: When will church doors open again? We want to reassure everyone for whom this remains a pressing concern that we have been working, both from an inter-faith as well as a Catholic perspective, to put in place the necessary protocols and guidelines. Rest assured, we will be ready!

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

† Christian Lépine
Archevêque de Montréal