



Archbishop of Montreal

Pastoral Letter :

Under the “new normal,” an enduring essential: the spiritual

October 7, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

October is here, and we are still in the grip of Covid-19. The second wave has arrived. Since the month of March we have been living with uncertainty, still waiting for a medical breakthrough, and with a growing awareness that we are uncertain whether the disease is in check or continues to spread. A certain fatigue, one can even say that fatigue certainly is setting in.

What are we discovering about ourselves and our families, and about society, the Church and God? We are learning a new approach to people as individuals, one that is more all-encompassing and more realistic. As we consider people’s physical health, we also think of their psychological needs, too. We realize that we are meant to be in relationship, and that we suffer when our sense of loneliness turns into isolation. We care for the well-being of others, and we seek to be in solidarity with them.

And we are finding it. The teams at the Archdiocese of Montreal, along with our parishes and various communities, hear from individuals on a daily basis expressing the need for spiritual support, regardless of their level of faith. Men and women, young and old, families and those living alone seek solace in the midst of their search for meaning, for peace and inner strength.

Numerous new activities have been undertaken during the periods of confinement, using a variety of means of communication. These have proven to be very effective, and we shall continue to develop them. They have, in fact, become indispensable, allowing us to make contact with those we already know as well as make many new contacts, too. These channels of communication have allowed us to reach out to individuals and families in their homes, to support the family as a domestic church called to prayer, to grow in communion, to serve and to witness.

This growing awareness of the essential nature of spiritual needs helps us to rediscover the importance of being physically present in church, which has a combined reciprocal effect of strengthening our emotional, psychological and spiritual well-being, our bodies, hearts and souls, both individually and as a community. The church is a house of prayer for the individual, the family and the community. It is a place of worship set to the rhythm of weekday and Sunday liturgical celebrations. It is a silent refuge for meditation, easily accessible and available. It is a doorway open to God. It is a school for solidarity and a mission-dispatch centre serving the spheres of family, work and societal life.

The doors of our hearts were never closed. Now, the doors of our churches are open also. Though the number of faithful congregating is limited, we must continue to meet the great responsibility of serving and nurturing the spiritual life and love.

We share in the concern for protecting public health, and we recognize the great good that comes from nourishing the human spirit by means of prayer and through the liturgy, the rosary, Eucharistic adoration, the Bible and the Mass.

The way we engage in the mission might vary, but the mission remains the same: to be witnesses to God's Love, to journey toward Jesus Christ, to become ever more fully the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the Body of Christ and sons and daughters of the Father, serving individuals, families and all of humanity.

Let us call on the Holy Spirit to assist us in being truly present to others, when we encounter or journey with others. Let us review our priorities. Let us rely on God, depending on his Providence and serving his Plan of Creation and Salvation.

The Church beckons and assists us in focusing on beauty and love, truth and goodness. Although not everything depends on us, each of us has his or her role to play. Let us not become discouraged. Let us not abandon the life of Christian fellowship, even if it has become restricted. In the face of the unknown, the spiritual life is a source of inner peace, fortifying our souls as we journey together calmly and bravely through the trials of this pandemic. Let us rediscover in the many aspects of our lives – the personal, the familial, the social, the church-related – under the new normal, the new essential: the spiritual.

On the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, may Mary teach us to embrace the “Yes” that faith requires. May God shower a threefold blessing upon us. May our lives as children of the Father and as brothers and sisters to one another grow through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

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

† Christian Lépine
Archevêque de Montréal