

COMMUNIQUÉ No. 20 — October 1, 2020
INFORMATION
To Pastors, Pastoral Teams and Religious Communities

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As hoped, the position of public officials regarding the spread of COVID-19 and our worship spaces has evolved. Thanks to a groundswell of public support, public authorities have recognized the specific role of faith communities and their places of worship in their response to the recent appeal of Quebec's religious leaders. That's good news!

Following the Sept. 29 meeting between representatives of the Interreligious Roundtable and the provincial Public Health director, Dr. Horacio Arruda, the following communiqué was issued <http://bit.ly/AECQSeptember292020> . In it, the religious leaders *“reiterate their commitment to collaborate with the authorities in order to contribute to the collective efforts for health and safety, while making essential spiritual care available to those in need, especially those who are grieving.”*

Therefore, in response to this universal call for a collective effort, by continuing to follow the health guidelines that have been issued for places of worship (physical distancing, good hygiene measures, and wearing facemasks), please take into account **the directives below for the period from October 1 to 28, 2020.**

1. Flexibility and Creativity

Since the start of the health crisis, we have taken into consideration that our diocese comprises a wide diversity of communities and resources (both pastoral and volunteer). The archbishop has called us to “carry on with the mission,” according to each person's capacity to do so. **We are continuing with this in mind for the month of October.** Therefore, I encourage pastoral teams, in discussion with teams from neighbouring parishes, to make decisions that are best suited to their situation, without forgetting to consult with their parishioners beforehand.

2. Open Churches

Keeping churches in the “red zone” open constitutes a significant advance in our discussions with public officials. It recognizes that sacred spaces and the celebrations that take place therein contribute not only to the spiritual health but also to the psychological health of many citizens.

Consequently, as much as possible, please consider ways in which your parishioners could gather and pray, either alone or as a family, in the place of worship under your care. Perhaps it is not possible to open church doors daylong, every day of the week. It is, nevertheless, desirable to set up specific time slots for this purpose and to publicize it in your community.

3. Liturgical Celebrations

A) Obligatory Attendance Registry

I would like to draw your attention to a **new requirement**. To facilitate the work of public-health officials in the event of an outbreak, a **registry of the people** participating in person is required for all celebrations (name, email

and telephone number). Please implement this attendance registry as soon as possible and retain the information for 30 days, in conformity with government guidelines.

B) Sunday and Weekday Masses

- i. The maximum number of participants at a celebration in the “red zone” is set at **25 people in the congregation. This excludes those leading the liturgical celebration (priests, cantors, musicians, altar servers, ushers)**. Clarification: each member of a family must be counted as separate individuals, children included.
- ii. For the Sundays in October, Archbishop Lépine has **renewed the dispensation from observing the Sunday obligation**, in effect during the pandemic.
- iii. Wherever pastoral teams discern that Sunday Masses cannot be celebrated, I invite you to plan in any case, and as circumstances permit, **to welcome the faithful** who might show up at church, to speak and to pray with them briefly, and to give them Communion, if so desired.
- iv. Wherever possible, you are encouraged to **consider creatively adapting to the situation while observing the 25-person limit**. Here are a few initiatives that some parishes implemented last weekend, as possibilities to consider:
 - Use parish halls or chapels adjacent to the church, with separate street access, for Liturgies of the Word or a faith-sharing on the Gospel, with or without Communion, in small groups. The choir loft is not considered a separate room.
 - **Take note:** if several celebrations are being held in the same space, one immediately after the next, remember to allot sufficient time between celebrations to disinfect the space and/or change the seating that is made available to the faithful for each celebration.
 - Make use of the exterior front entrance, potentially installing speakers outside the church so that people outside can follow the celebration taking place indoors.
 - Distribute Communion outside the church front entrance to those who request it, offering a brief reflection, praying the Our Father, etc.
 - Where technical means allow, continue broadcasting Sunday Masses online.
 - Wherever possible, plan times for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, as well as specific time slots to welcome the faithful for the sacrament of Reconciliation.

C) Funerals and Burials

Funerals and burials can be held with a maximum of 25 people in the congregation (or at the cemetery for burials), not including those assisting with the funeral rites and process. Thank you for reminding participants of the public-health directives forbidding any private gatherings that may follow.

Please note that a minister can also agree to celebrate a Liturgy of the Word at a funeral home if the same health directives are followed.

D) Weddings, Baptisms, First Communions (and first Confessions), Confirmations

You are urged **to postpone** all weddings, baptisms, first Communions, celebrations of first confessions and confirmations that have been scheduled for the month of October. All celebrations that usually follow such events being prohibited, as well as private gatherings, everything must be postponed.

E) Spiritual Care and Anointing of the Sick

Visits to private homes and CHSLDs for pastoral or spiritual care have been authorized by Public Health. We encourage you to be attentive to the spiritual needs of people who are alone, sick or who are grieving. While taking their own health into consideration, pastors can also assist at the bedside of those who are suffering to give them the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

F) FAQ (Frequently asked questions)

An updated list of questions and answers regarding the adaptation for places of worship in the "red zone" will be published on the diocesan website (<https://www.diocesemontreal.org/en/parish-resources/pastoral-personnel>). We invite you to consult it next week.

G) Diocesan "Deconfinement" Committee

During this difficult time, when Greater Montreal has been classified as a "red zone," the Diocesan "Deconfinement" Committee invites you to attend **online meetings**, in French and in English, **every Tuesday, from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30**. These meetings will feature the sharing of experiences and innovative practices in order to offer support in maintaining activities that have been authorized for our places of worship. To participate in the meeting and to receive a link for the videoconference, please send an email to: deconfinement@diocesemontreal.org.

4. Solidarity Initiatives

The pandemic is creating much anxiety and loneliness. Wherever possible, with the help of volunteers from your community, please set up solidarity networks: visit or call your most isolated parishioners; receive and respond with an attentive ear to the requests that come in by phone or email.

Since community-support organizations are permitted to continue their activities in the red zone, thank you for finding ways to keep your food pantries, rummage sales, thrift shops, and other resources accessible so as to contribute to the health and safety of our fellow citizens.

The need for volunteers is increasing. Those faithful able to do so are urged to contribute to the community efforts that have been identified in each district, whether or not they are directly related to COVID: www.jebenevole.ca.

5. Catechism

For every parish during this period, the most important thing is **to maintain communication with the families** in our communities, whether or not they have chosen to participate in the catechism program this fall.

- a) **For the month of October**, the present situation requires that in-person catechism classes be cancelled. However, parishes that are able to offer online classes may continue to do so.

- b) Each parish is called to offer a variety of faith resources (online, print, etc.) to the families within its neighbourhood and to parishioners of all ages, and offer as well activities that will nourish their faith. For example, propose that families set aside a moment for prayer or sharing, at home or at church.

The pastoral year now underway must unfold under the guidance of mercy as regards our pastoral and ecclesial work: no one is expected to do the impossible! Nevertheless throughout this pandemic, there is without a doubt an opportunity to seize; namely, a possible rethinking of our practices regarding the sacraments of Christian initiation. What comes to mind is a more focused attention on parents, who come with their concerns and needs; a better integration of prayer experience and community involvement to the initiation process; developing our ability and means to facilitate formation sessions online or through “hybrid” formats.

ENG: <https://microsites.diocesemontreal.org/microsites/missionjeunesse-mtl/en/hybrid-pastoral-approach/>

FRA : <https://microsites.diocesemontreal.org/microsites/missionjeunesse-mtl/fr/pastorale-hybride/>

Meetings for pastoral workers are being organized during October to offer a forum to share the challenges faced in planning and organizing pastoral activities. The Office for Faith Education is available to support you in this work and to discuss ideas with you. Continue to call on this team to share your ideas, as well as your concerns: phaddad@diocesemontreal.org.

6. Good news : Priestly Ordination of Francis Bégin

The ordination of our brother Francis will be held October 2 at 7:30 p.m. Archbishop Christian Lépine will preside. You can watch the Mass live on the YouTube channel “Diocèse de Montréal”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-bhpof2MvY&feature=youtu.be>.

The exceptional circumstances of this pandemic are such that October will be a Missionary Month like no other. Let us support one another (cf. Col 3:13)! Archbishop Lépine and the [bishops of Quebec](#) are publishing this week messages to this effect. I join them in encouraging us all to have hope, and I assure you of my commitment to be at your service.

In Christ, our Rock,



+ Alain Faubert, VG
Auxiliary Bishop of Montreal