

COMMUNIQUÉ No. 23 — November 27, 2020
INFORMATION
To Pastors, Pastoral Teams and Religious Communities

Dear brothers and sisters,

This communiqué is mainly concerned with the Advent season approaching. The recent news surrounding the Capriolo Report reminds us forcefully that this world, and our Church, are in need of a Saviour. Let us therefore increase the zeal of our shared prayers.

1. Guidelines and instructions for the Advent-Christmas Season

A) Number of participants at celebrations

For the time being, we have received no instructions from Public Health through the Assembly of Bishops and the Interfaith Table increasing or decreasing the maximum number of participants at liturgical celebrations in the 'red zone.' Therefore, until further notice, the rule remains in effect limiting to 25 the number of participants in the congregation (with each family member counting as one participant), excluding those leading the liturgical celebration. We will keep you updated on any changes.

B) Sacrament of Reconciliation

Some pastors have inquired if it would be possible to perform collective absolution in celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation, given the pandemic situation. Archbishop Lépine does not favour this approach. He would prefer that gatherings be limited and also encourages personal meetings, since many faithful feel the need for a personal dialogue. Pastoral teams are encouraged to suggest appropriate times for those wishing to receive the sacrament of reconciliation, by making an appointment, for instance, or announcing blocks of time when a priest will be available in the church. Public-health instructions regarding such matters as distancing and mask-wearing must naturally be followed. We wish to remind everyone that use of the confessional is not recommended.

C) Sacrament of Confirmation

Last August, Archbishop Lépine granted priests extraordinary faculties for confirming children and adults. These faculties, in effect until December 13, will not be extended for the time being. If a need arises beyond that date, please contact the Chancery for an *ad hoc* authorization at: chancellerie@diocesemontreal.org. A reassessment of the situation is set for January.

D) Catechetical training

• **From January to June, 2021**

We are still unsure as to what conditions will apply to catechetical meetings after the Holidays. The planning of activities around Christian initiation in January 2021 will therefore have to combine both virtual and in-person approaches (Hybrid Pastoral approach). With respect to preparation for the sacraments, our Archbishop reminds us that we are called to offer positive responses to the needs expressed by families, as well as to plot a progression that provides recognition of their participation in activities of spiritual renewal (for example, participation in an Advent meditation), as integral elements in preparing to celebrate the sacrament of Christian initiation.

- **Online catechesis for children and families: Training offered by Dr. Sophie Tremblay of the *Institut de pastorale des Dominicains***

I strongly recommend that you register for this session (offered only in French) for RSEs, pastoral workers, catechists, priests, deacons and all those concerned with the catechism. The meeting will be conducted **free of charge** via ZOOM and will be offered three times: from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 1, Tuesday, December 8, and Saturday, December 12. You are encouraged to register soon with Rosetta Staltari, Secretary, Office for Faith Education: rstaltari@diocesemontreal.org.

2. Ideas for Advent-Christmas

Many of you participated in the virtual meetings on November 18, during which lots of ideas were shared concerning our life in the Church through the Advent and Christmas Seasons. The recorded meetings, along with a compilation of the [good ideas](#) that were shared, is now available on the diocesan website: <https://diocesemontreal.org/en/parish-resources/pastoral-personnel>

After looking at these ideas, all of which are good in themselves, I would like to make a few recommendations:

- a. To many, the idea of increasing the number of Masses on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day may appear desirable. But keep in mind your own energy levels during this demanding holiday season. I am also grateful to you for thinking of maintaining the time periods for church visits, especially for the benefit of those who are less in the habit of going to the place of worship in their area.
- b. Make use of communication in your areas and your circles, which will also attract those who are more 'distant.'
- c. Think in terms of working together, consulting and mutually sharing information among parishes located in the same area, especially with respect to tending to the poor and the isolated.
- d. The holiday season is difficult for those who are alone. Simple initiatives, such as a 'phone tree,' seem best to me.
- e. With respect to solidarity with the poor: the virus must not be allowed to prevent us from carrying out our works of generosity. If we are afraid of the virus spreading, we can consider gift cards or ensure that foodstuffs are disinfected.

If you have other ideas to share, do not hesitate to forward them to me (vg@diocesemontreal.org), and we will add them to this list.

3. Microsite

As we had announced, a microsite dedicated especially to *Waiting in Joyful Hope* and *Welcoming Hope and Joy* has been designed jointly by several diocesan offices. The site offers a series of 'reading lists' for children, teens, young adults and older adults, alone or in family groups, to help them prepare their hearts for the arrival of the Lord in our midst. Material for Advent will be available as of today, November 27 at the end of the day, and resources for Christmas will be added on the microsite on December 13. We encourage you to visit at: <https://microsites.diocesemontreal.org/microsites/avent/>

4. Development and Peace: COVID-19 Campaign

This fall, Development and Peace launched their campaign: *COVID-19: Recovering together*, with the purpose of providing aid to the people of the southern-hemisphere countries most critically affected by the pandemic. I would invite you, if you have the wherewithal to do so, to undertake a collection in your parish supporting this campaign. If this is not possible, I would encourage you nonetheless to speak about the campaign with the faithful in your parish and invite them to participate, as donations can always be made online, by telephone or by mail. Those interested will also find all the material concerning this campaign on the Development and Peace website, which contains valuable resources for use if you should decide to run a fundraising campaign in your parish:
<https://www.devp.org/en/campaign/recoveringtogether>

Any questions you may have about the campaign can be answered by your parish's Development and Peace representative or by the chairperson of the diocesan council of Development and Peace in Montreal, Mme H el ene Gobeil (telephone: (514) 388-2965 or email: hgobeil@gmail.com).

I wish you joy as we enter this blessed Advent Season. May the God of Hope sustain our trust in the future and our vigilance in His service!



+ Alain Faubert, VG
Auxiliary Bishop of Montreal