



April 16, 2021

2 pages via e-mail

To all clergy and staff of the Archdiocese of Toronto,

Late this afternoon, the provincial government announced further restrictions in an attempt to minimize the transmission of Covid-19, given the alarming increase in new cases over the past 10 days. The new measures have a direct impact on places of worship as part of an extended stay-at-home order, which will be in place until at least May 20, 2021.

As you are likely aware, the number of new cases, especially in Toronto, Peel and York, have increased dramatically. While I firmly believe we offer an essential “service” and have demonstrated our ability to welcome the faithful safely given our stringent WorshipSafe measures, we must also recognize the serious nature of the current situation.

### **Restrictions for All Parishes in the Archdiocese of Toronto as of Monday, April 19, 2021**

- Parishes must restrict attendance inside the church to 10 people, including priests hearing confessions or a staff member/volunteer required to monitor capacity restrictions. Due to these measures, public Masses must be temporarily cancelled. Priests are asked to celebrate private Mass daily for the intentions of parishioners and for those suffering from Covid-19.
- Churches, wherever possible and according to the judgement of the pastor, are encouraged to remain open for private prayer and for the faithful to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Parishes may also proceed with Holy Communion services on Saturday afternoon/evening or Sunday as in the past, if desired. A sample service will be provided next week. Weddings, funerals and baptisms are restricted to 10 persons, including those who are involved in ministry (priest, cantor, etc.). First Holy Communion, First Reconciliation and Confirmations should be postponed at this time.
- No meetings should take place in parish halls or other church spaces at this time. The only exception would be those deemed as essential services eg. Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous Meetings, Food Bank distribution, etc. These activities should be restricted to 10 people and ensure that all appropriate health and safety measures are in place (use of masks, hand sanitizer, physical distancing, etc.). Virtual meetings should replace in-person meetings wherever possible.
- Parish offices should continue to operate at Phase 1 – Parish Offices Closed/Significant Operating Restrictions. Only essential staff in the office. Employees should work remotely wherever possible. Parish offices closed to the public - limited essential appointments only. Staff should take direction from the pastor regarding the local situation on the most prudent approach. In larger parishes, it may be possible to rotate staff if they cannot work remotely.
- I also wish to stress the importance of robust health and safety measures in the rectory and office. In addition to keeping our parishioners safe, every measure should be taken to protect our clergy, essential staff and any volunteers who are required to assist at this time.



- Even with extremely limited numbers, I reiterate how critically important it is for every parish to implement our extensive WorshipSafe measures to ensure that we may continue to welcome the faithful safely.
- Please let your parishioners know that the elderly, those with compromised immune systems or other health conditions should be strongly encouraged to remain home. Livestreaming of services should continue where this practice is underway and the dispensation from the Sunday Eucharist remains. A full list of livestream services can be accessed at: [www.archtoronto.org](http://www.archtoronto.org).

I very much recognize the significant stress and anxiety that many clergy, staff and volunteers are feeling given the current situation and the ongoing demands of operating churches in these unique and challenging circumstances over the past year. Clergy may reach out to their Regional Bishop or the Office of Clergy Personnel at any time and staff are encouraged to dialogue with their supervisor and/or Human Resources.

Thank you for your ongoing vigilance in implementing these health and safety measures during this critical period and for adapting to this difficult situation once again. Know that I am most appreciative of your efforts to remain present to the faithful during this time of pandemic. Please continue to pray for all those who are sick and those caring for them.

Saint Michael the Archangel, pray for us.

Sincerely in Christ,

*† Thomas Card. Collins*

Thomas Cardinal Collins  
Archbishop of Toronto