



April 1, 2021

2 pages via e-mail

To all clergy and staff of the Archdiocese of Toronto,

This afternoon, the provincial government announced restrictions throughout Ontario in an attempt to minimize the transmission of Covid-19. Some of these changes will impact places of worship and will take effect as of Saturday, April 3, 2021.

### **Toronto & Peel**

No changes to existing restrictions (15% capacity remains in place).

### **York, Durham, Simcoe & Orangeville – changes effective as of April 3, 2021**

As of Saturday, April 3, 2021, all places of worship throughout the province are restricted to 15% capacity for the next 28 days. I recognize the anxiety this will cause at this late date in preparing for the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday, given that most parishes already have reservations in place for these services. I offer the following guidance to parishes in these areas:

- For most parishes, we know that given the physical distancing restrictions, “true” capacity is closer to 15% than it is to 30%. We also know that some people with reservations do not present themselves for a particular service. We do not recommend that you cancel existing reservations at this time.
- Due to these extraordinary circumstances, the parish hall may be used for overflow, ensuring physical distancing at all times. This applies only to Easter Weekend – moving forward, the hall should not be used during the “shutdown” period as is the case for parishes in the Grey Zone.
- If feasible, additional Masses may be added on Easter Sunday, recognizing that many parishes have already done so.
- Given the extremely limited window to implement changes, parishes should make their best efforts to move to 15% capacity and ensure that WorshipSafe guidelines are strictly enforced.
- Funerals - effective Monday, April 5, 2021 - funerals and visitations in Grey-Lockdown zones are permitted to allow up to 15 per cent of capacity for the entire facility with physical distancing to a maximum of 50 people for indoor services (not including funeral home staff). Parishes are asked to liaise with funeral homes prior to making arrangements with families for additional clarity.

### **Reminders for all Parishes**

- In particular, health officials have expressed concern regarding the faithful congregating in or around the church before or after services in large numbers. This point should be communicated to parishioners – arrival and dismissal should be co-ordinated in such a fashion to ensure large groups do not congregate.



- Livestreaming of services should continue where this practice is underway and the dispensation from the Sunday Eucharist continues. The elderly, those with compromised immune systems or other health conditions should be encouraged to exercise extreme caution about any outings, including attendance at church.
- The number of Covid-19 cases in the province has risen significantly in recent days. For the safety of all, it is imperative that each parish ensure all WorshipSafe guidelines are clearly followed to protect parishioners, clergy and staff.

I fully recognize the inconvenience and frustration these changes so late in the week will cause for all clergy and parish staff. I also appreciate your efforts in pastorally communicating with parishioners, so many of whom would like to attend church this week but are not able to do so due to these restrictions. Thank you for your patience and kindness in dealing with these situations.

We pray that, even in the midst of these logistical challenges, we will enter into a prayerful spirit of reflection and meditation on the death and resurrection of our Lord during these holy days.

As always, be assured of my gratitude for your prayers and ongoing pastoral support of the faithful.

Sincerely in Christ,

*+ Thomas Card. Collins*

Thomas Cardinal Collins  
Archbishop of Toronto