



Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria

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M E M O

Date: March 13, 2020
To: Pastors
From: Bishop Gary Gordon
Re: Update for Clergy in Response to COVID-19

Due to the increasing concerns over the spread of COVID-19, British Columbia's Public Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry directed "all event organizers to cancel any gathering larger than 250 people." With regard to this new instruction and out of careful concern for the well-being of the entire community, attendance at Mass and all other Church events in the Diocese of Victoria will now be limited to a maximum of 250 people until further notice.

I am aware that it may be difficult to keep the number of attendees below 250. However, I am confident that with ingenuity and compassion, pastors and parish staff can work together to achieve this. For churches that are very small, you will need to be very diligent about creating the situation for social distancing (1-2 metres). For example, if your church has a capacity for 250 people you should try and limit the number to 150. You may need to add additional Masses.

Please provide alternative options for those who will not be able to attend Sunday Mass due to these restrictions. Mass can be accessed online at dailytvmass.com or on Vision TV. Everyone is encouraged to set aside a time of prayer. Use the readings of Sunday and a spiritual communion. Remind your parishioners that these are unusual times. If they are not able to attend Sunday Mass, or attempt to and are unable due to the new attendance limitations, **their obligation has been met.**

All parishioners should avoid physical contact with others at Mass and should make every effort to practice social distancing (1-2 metres apart). I recommend that anyone over the age of 65, as well as those who feel even remotely unwell and have underlying medical conditions, or those who believe they might be genuinely at risk, to please stay at home rather than attend Sunday Mass.

A few things to note:

1. Out of consideration for the well-being of others in the community, the elderly, anyone with an underlying health condition, and those who feel even remotely unwell are excused from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass.



2. Baptisms should take place outside of Mass times with just the immediate family.
3. We will continue to do funerals, but with no receptions.
4. Penitential services, if they are typically small, may continue to go forward, and/or put on more confession times at the Church

Please adhere to all the previous memos and recommendations I have sent. Remember that these measures are temporary although imperative to the health and well-being of not only our faith family, but everyone in our communities. As leaders of faith, we must remember that we are here to help our parishioners remain **calm, confident, and connected**.

Let us all continue to pray for everyone who has been affected by COVID-19, especially those who have lost their lives and their families.