

**Directives for celebrating the sacraments
during a public-health emergency (COVID-19)**

March 24, 2020

Brothers and sisters, we are currently facing a pernicious evil: it spreads more easily when we don't feel any symptoms. Thus, a Church minister might not display any symptoms but might still be a carrier of the virus.

The following directives, which are based upon those recently adopted (March 17) by the Italian Bishops' Conference, **outline, complete and replace** those directives which had been previously published regarding sacramental ministry in our diocese during the current public-health emergency.

1. Celebration of the Mass “in camera,” i.e. without the faithful present

- a. Pay particular attention to hygiene and the storage of hosts and wine to be consecrated. Ensure the corporal and pall are laundered frequently and wash the purificators after each mass. Have both a dispenser with either liquid soap or an alcohol-based solution and disposable paper towels available, dedicated solely to washing hands before Mass and following the distribution of Communion.
- b. Web broadcasting (Skype, Facebook, etc.): you must restrict the number of persons present. The public-health directives are clear: no more than two or three persons, including yourself.

2. Sacrament of Baptism

- a. All baptisms are postponed to a later date.
- b. In the case where a baptism cannot be postponed until after the public-health emergency has ended (as in the case of children or adults suffering from an illness that poses an imminent danger to their life), adhere to the following instructions:
 - In an institutional setting, respect the decisions of the Management.
 - Take all necessary sanitary precautions, in particular that which concerns proper hand hygiene;
 - Following *The Rite of Baptism for a Child in Danger of Death* (Ritual for the Baptism of Children); no anointing, the sign of the cross on the forehead is omitted;
 - Restrict the number of participants to three, including the child to be baptized and the minister;
 - Foresee that, when public gatherings resume, a ceremony welcoming the recently baptized to the community be held (found in the Ritual for the Baptism of Children).



3. *Sacrament of Reconciliation*

- a. Considering the rapid spread of the virus and government directives to combat it, we are avoiding all unnecessary movement and physical contact. Since the sacrament must be celebrated in the presence of a penitent, it is not possible to grant sacramental absolution for now.
- b. The means of social communication (telephone, Internet) can be very useful, however, in receiving a confession, providing consolation and a blessing with a view to imparting absolution later, when the public-health situation permits a sacramental encounter.
- c. Pastors can remind penitents of the following note from the Apostolic Penitentiary: “Where the individual faithful find themselves in the painful impossibility of receiving sacramental absolution, it should be remembered that perfect contrition, coming from the love of God, beloved above all things, expressed by a sincere request for forgiveness (that which the penitent is at present able to express) and accompanied by *votum confessionis*, that is, by the firm resolution to have recourse, as soon as possible, to sacramental confession, obtains forgiveness of sins, even mortal ones (cf. CCC, no. 1452).”
- d. For a person nearing death, see the guidelines listed below for Anointing of the Sick.

4. *Anointing of the Sick*

- a. It is administered only in the case of a dying person.
- b. In an institutional setting, respect the decisions of the Management.
- c. Take all necessary sanitary precautions, in particular that which concerns proper hand hygiene.
- d. A minister who is called to the bedside of a dying person brings a small brush with him preferably or a pair of disposable gloves (vinyl or latex), taking care not to touch the surface of the gloves with his fingers after removing them.
- e. Given that the danger of imminent death exists, pronouncing the key words of the absolution formula will suffice for the priest to grant sacramental pardon.

5. *Communion*

- a. Given the present context of a pandemic, there is no distribution of Holy Communion, including the Viaticum
- b. Pastors should invite the faithful to live in spiritual communion, viewing, if possible, the celebration of Mass available through various mass communication means.

6. *Marriages*

All marriages, **without exception**, are postponed, even those that can be held with a very limited number of participants.

7. Funerals and burials

- a. All funerals and Liturgies of the Word in funeral homes are postponed.
- b. Regarding the burial of coffins or urns in Catholic cemeteries, the Québec Department of Public Health has set the limit for the number of persons present at two or three.

Reminder: Archbishop Lépine has expressly asked all those who minister (priests, permanent deacons, lay persons) and who are 70 years and older, as well as those who are at risk due to their state of health, to stay at home.

Thank you for respecting these guidelines. We have a sacred duty to save lives. Every gesture counts. Let us remain united to the Lord and with one another in prayer and in solidarity with our fellow citizens during this difficult time.

In Jesus our Saviour,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "+ Alain Faubert". The signature is written in a cursive style.

+ Alain Faubert, V.G.
Auxiliary Bishop of Montreal