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March 12, 2021

Earlier today, the provincial government announced changes to the restrictions on places of worship currently in the Grey (Lockdown) Zone. As of Monday, March 15, 2021, churches in this designation (in the archdiocese, currently Toronto and Peel Regions) will be permitted 15 per cent capacity for religious services.

This is a significant improvement from the hard cap of 10 people that has been in place for several months and it is a more balanced approach in light of the recently relaxed restrictions in other sectors.

Your Voices Were Heard

A week ago, we launched the “A Place to Worship” campaign, inviting the faithful to contact their Member of Provincial Parliament to ask for a fair and balanced approach to restrictions for places of worship. More than 13,000 letters were written, with 80 per cent sent within 48 hours of the request. I am grateful to all those who participated in the campaign.

Earlier this week, a diverse group of faith leaders had the opportunity to meet virtually with Premier Ford, Minister Elliott and Dr. Williams to discuss our concerns. I wish to extend my profound gratitude to the provincial government for sharing generously of their time and for the healthy dialogue that was exchanged.

I know that many Members of Provincial Parliament also advocated for a just and equitable approach for places of worship, on behalf of their constituents, and I thank them as well.

WorshipSafe Health & Safety Protocols

As Catholics, the source and summit of our spiritual life is participation in the Eucharist. The faithful have not been able to experience this reality since December 2020 in Toronto and Peel.

In light of today’s announcement, I have asked churches in these areas to begin celebrating public Masses as soon as they are able to implement our WorshipSafe health and safety protocols, as early as March 15, 2021 and no later than Thursday, March 18, 2021. Please contact your local parish for more details regarding their plans.

These safety protocols have been in place since our re-opening in June 2020. From June to December of last year, with attendance of 1.5 million, fewer than 50 people who attended our churches reported COVID-19 cases; none of their cases was traced back to the church as a source of community transmission and there is no evidence that they infected others while at church.

Continued Vigilance

I do wish to stress that the Grey (Lockdown) Zones are still very much in areas where positive cases of Covid-19 are highest in the province. We must continue to take the necessary steps, out of love for neighbour, to protect one another. We recognize the vast majority of the faithful will not be attending services in person.


In addition to our WorshipSafe measures, livestreaming of services will continue and dispensation from the Sunday Eucharist remains. 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.

A Time for Christian Love

This is a time of great emotional and spiritual trauma, and people need the strength offered by faith. Whether it has been comforting the family grieving the loss of a parent, praying with a spouse who has experienced domestic violence, or assisting a suicidal parishioner suffering from isolation and insecurity in the midst of the pandemic, faith communities continue to be on the front line of prayer, care and outreach.

We will continue to safely and thoughtfully support those who need us most during this period of pandemic, as we continue to pray for those who are sick, those who have died and those who continue to care for them.

Thank you once again to all those who engaged in respectful dialogue with their elected Member of Provincial Parliament. May God continue to bless you now and always.

Sincerely in Christ,

 Thomas Cardinal Collins
 Archbishop of Toronto

