



## Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. John's, NL

### Message from the Archbishop

June 19, 2020

#### **Re: Reopening our Churches and Offices to the Public**

Dear People of the Archdiocese of St. John's:

On Wednesday, the Chief Medical Officer announced that the Province will be entering Level 2 on June 25<sup>th</sup> 2020. We know that according to the guidelines for this level, churches will be permitted to reopen "with restrictions". These restrictions have not yet been communicated to the Archdiocese and other Faith Communities. The COVID-19 Sub-committee of the Presbyteral Council has been working on a Diocesan Plan for the reopening of our church buildings. However, they have been unable to finalize this plan due to the lack of information regarding these restrictions.

Recently, I was invited to participate in a virtual meeting with the Chief Medical Officer and other Provincial Faith Leaders on Tuesday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> to "...discuss spiritual gatherings in Alert Level 2 of our public health emergency." I expect that the restrictions on public worship at Alert Level 2 will be a major topic at this meeting.

Once we have received the information on these restrictions, our Sub-committee will be able to finalize pastoral ministry guidelines for Alert Level 2 and we will be able to send them to the priests and parishes of the Archdiocese. However, this does not mean that our church buildings will be able to reopen right away. Each parish and parish priest will need to study the guidelines and prepare parish staff and volunteers to implement and administer them in the parish. Once the parish priest, and parishioners working with him, are confident that they can safely open their church for public worship according to the Public Health Measures and Archdiocesan Guidelines, they will be required to submit to the Archdiocese information on their proposed Mass schedule and the times when their church will be open for private prayer.

Furthermore, our Archdiocesan Occupational Health and Safety Committee has been preparing guidelines for reopening to the public our diocesan and parish offices. These guidelines will be sent out in the near future. As with the pastoral ministry guidelines, each parish and parish priest will need to study these guidelines and submit to the Archdiocese information on their proposed schedule for reopening the parish office to the public.

As we prepare to open our parish churches and offices to our parishioners and to the public, we must ensure that the health of everyone is protected and kept safe. This being the case, we can only open our churches and offices when we are properly prepared and ready. The Archdiocese will be pleased to do whatever we can to explain the guidelines and to support the parishes in implementing them effectively.

Asking that you continue to join with me in praying that God will bless all of us in our efforts to minister prudently and wisely during this time of pandemic, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Peter Hundt  
Archbishop of St. John's, Nfld.