



Office of the Bishop

New Directives as COVID-19 Worsens

19 November 2020

Dear Pastors,

Greetings in the Lord!

As you may have heard, new orders have been issued from the Provincial health authorities and our Government officials that affect our churches and parish celebrations for at least the next 2 weeks. This is not what any of us want to hear, but we are required by law to comply with these orders. Therefore, effective 20 November 2020:

- Mass can only be offered on-line or virtually since all indoor gatherings are suspended
- Weddings and funerals are allowed with a maximum of 10 people including the celebrant
- Baptisms are allowed with immediate family only
- Soup kitchens may continue, but food is to be distributed as take-out
- 12 step meetings are allowed with the proper COVID protocols in place: maximum number is up to 50 people depending on the capacity of the venue
- Parish and diocesan staff are encouraged to work remotely if possible

In order not to deprive our people of the Eucharist, please consider offering Holy Communion to those people who attend Mass virtually, by distributing Holy Communion to them after Mass outside the church.

Suggested Procedure: Have people come in their cars, roll down their window, receive Holy Communion in their hand, remove their mask, consume the Eucharist and leave. Please ensure that you are wearing a mask and have sanitized your hands before distributing Communion. Have sanitizer on hand in case you touch the person's hand.

You will need to start or reactivate your phone or email trees to ensure that we are keeping in contact with our parishioners, especially those who are homebound or do not have access to email or the Internet.

Please use your creativity when it comes to confession, and adapt as necessary to your local circumstances.

This will be a time when we need to be a source of encouragement and hope to our people, as this will be very disappointing news to many. Yet, this is another opportunity to do our part to flatten the curve and bring down the number of people being infected. You may have to reinforce this messaging.

I am deeply grateful for your on-going efforts to comply with all the directives to keep our people safe. We know that this is not only for our own benefit, but also for the wider community and the whole province.

Please pray that everyone's efforts to bring down the numbers are successful so that our churches can be open for Christmas celebrations, and we can celebrate our Saviour's birth, Christ Jesus our hope (1 Tim 1.1).

May Our Lady of Monte Berico continue to protect us and accompany us during this pandemic.

God bless you.

Sincerely in Christ our Lord,



✠ Gregory J Bittman
Bishop of Nelson