



## DIOCESE OF ST. CATHARINES

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THE CHANCERY

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### CHANGES TO COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

On Monday, February 14, 2022, the Government of Ontario announced changes to COVID-19 restrictions so that:

#### **EFFECTIVE THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2022**

The capacity limit is removed for religious services, rites and ceremonies only where proof of vaccination is required. **For churches in the Diocese of St. Catharines, there is no change to capacity limits at this time.**

Capacity for indoor weddings, funerals or religious services, rites, or ceremonies is limited to the number of people who can maintain two metres physical distance.

For parish social, public events and gatherings, including Synod discussion group meetings, capacity will increase to 50 people indoors and 100 people outdoors.

Contact tracing for churches and parish offices/events will no longer be required.

Masks and physical distancing are still required for all church services and in office settings.

Holy water fonts are to remain empty until such time as a further direction is issued to allow for their use.

#### **EFFECTIVE TUESDAY, MARCH 1, 2022**

Tentatively, provided public health and health system indicators continue to improve:

- capacity limits in all indoor public settings, including churches, will be lifted;
- proof of vaccination requirements for all settings, including churches, will be lifted.

Masking requirements will remain for all public spaces, including churches and office settings.

For those who are sick, have a compromised immune system or feel uncomfortable returning to church at this time, the dispensation for Sunday Mass remains.

#### **SEASON OF LENT**

For our Lenten observances, including Ash Wednesday Masses and liturgical services, all churches can be open to full capacity for the first time in two years.

Ashes may be distributed according to usual custom, with ashes placed on foreheads.

Palms can be distributed.

Reconciliation services can be celebrated according to usual customs and procedures.

Clergy visits to schools, and school Masses in the church may be planned, with the permission of school principals.

Issued: February 15, 2022

CATHOLIC CENTRE: 3400 Merrittville Highway, Thorold, Ontario

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