



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

June 10, 2020

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I am so pleased that I can share with you some good news during this time of pandemic. The Ontario Government announced on Monday, June 8, that all places of worship will be allowed to open to the public at 30% capacity. We should thank God that we can, once again, open our churches for personal prayer and the public celebration of the Sacraments.

Parish Churches will begin opening when they are ready and have all protocols in place. For some, this will begin on the Feast of Corpus Christi (June 14, 2020).

As we move into this re-opening phase, the following priorities guide our planning:

- The health and safety of the faithful, clergy, staff and volunteers.
- Proactive measures to avoid the potential of a second surge of this virus;
- Recognizing the very basic commandment – love of neighbour – we have a responsibility to care for one another.

To accomplish these will require certain procedures that you will hear about directly from your pastor and through parish communication channels. Pertinent information will be posted on our Diocesan website and will also be made available to you through your parish.

Be assured that a detailed “return plan” has been shared with all of our parishes and will be implemented in the days ahead. We pray that these measures will be temporary.

For those who are sick, have a compromised immune system or feel uncomfortable returning to church at this time, the dispensation from the obligation of Sunday Mass remains during this period of uncertainty.

Given the capacity restrictions that are in place as we re-open churches, we will also continue to livestream Masses wherever possible, recognizing all will not be able to gather at this time. There may also be a need for additional Sunday Masses. Local parishes will also communicate their plans regarding their Mass schedules and other logistics related to attendance and re-opening.

Approaching these uncertain days with a spirit of kindness and generosity to one another will help us all as we navigate the path ahead. I continue to be inspired by the countless acts of goodwill and charity taking place throughout our diocese.

May we continue to pray for the sick, those who have died during this pandemic and for those caring for them. Be assured of my gratitude for your patience and faithfulness during this closure period. Please be assured of my prayers and best wishes.

With kind regards, I remain

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gerard Bergie". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Most Reverend Gerard Bergie, D.D.  
Bishop of St. Catharines