



March 5, 2021

1 page via e-mail plus 2 attachments

To all clergy and staff of the Archdiocese of Toronto,

I wish to provide an update regarding today's provincial announcement on Covid-19 restrictions and inform you of an engagement initiative that is being launched.

### **Toronto and Peel Regions**

As of Monday, March 8, 2021, Toronto and Peel will return to the colour-coded framework with the Grey (Lockdown) designation. Under current provincial guidelines, this does not change the situation for places of worship with restrictions of no more than 10 people in the church, including the priest and those assisting with the liturgy. Holy Communion Services may continue on weekends with parishes encouraged to open the church each day for a period of private prayer. Parishes may also offer services via livestream.

### **Durham, Simcoe (NEW) & Orangeville**

Simcoe Region returns to the Red (Control) zone as of Monday, March 8, 2021, joining Durham and Orangeville. For sacramental celebrations, 30% capacity is permitted. Please refer to the memo earlier this week from Fr. Curtis referencing additional restrictions on funerals from the Bereavement Authority of Ontario. We are working with the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario to convey our concerns regarding this issue.

### **Additional Initiatives**

I am deeply troubled by two aspects of the current situation:

- a) The province has relaxed restrictions for retailers in the Grey (Lockdown) zones, permitting them to operate at 25% capacity while places of worship continue with a hard cap of 10 people.
- b) Despite a formal request one month ago, the province has not met directly with a group of interfaith leaders to discuss issues of concern and opportunities for collaboration.

While I do not believe the government is intentionally suppressing religious freedom, it appears that places of worship are not being treated equitably with these latest restrictions. It is now appropriate for us to respectfully amplify our concerns by asking the faithful to connect with their Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) as well as Premier Ford.

The archdiocese has produced a simple webpage, accessible at [www.aplacetoworship.ca](http://www.aplacetoworship.ca) – visitors can very easily send a pre-written or self-edited letter to their MPP with a copy to Premier Ford. I encourage all parishes (even in areas where 30% capacity is permitted) to participate in the initiative. Additional details are attached. I will be using the archdiocesan e-mail list to ask the faithful to participate. We have also shared this resource with our ecumenical and inter-faith partners so you will note that the materials are not specifically Catholic in nature and speak more generally of places of worship.

Thank you for your ongoing patience and co-operation as we navigate these challenging days.

Sincerely in Christ,

*+ Thomas Card. Collins*

Thomas Cardinal Collins  
Archbishop of Toronto