

COVID-19 Update from Archbishop Prendergast (May 28, 2020)

At the weekly teleconference with the Episcopal Council, we discussed the continuation of the COVID-19 lockdown. I direct the following be communicated to all people of the Archdiocese:

1. Continuation of the Lockdown

We continue to follow strictly the directions of the Government of Ontario and local health authorities as to when the lockdown will be lifted. Yesterday, Premier Ford extended the emergency closures until at least June 9. With the other dioceses in Ontario, we are awaiting guidelines being prepared under the auspices of the Bishops of Ontario to safely reopen our churches. These guidelines will then be implemented at the diocesan level. We are mindful that preparations for the return to celebrations of the Mass and sacraments will take a great deal of organization and work in order to maintain a healthy environment to prevent further spread of the coronavirus. Some initial guidance has been sent to parishes to begin their preparation.

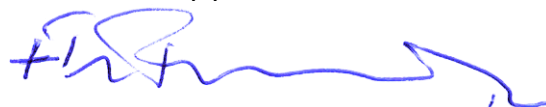
In light of the above, we foresee that our churches will remain closed at least until the end of June. If the government's emergency orders are lifted sooner, we will adjust accordingly.

2. Cancellation of Summer Gatherings

All social and other religious events normally held during the summer months are cancelled at least until August 31. This directive is contingent on governmental directions as noted above. It includes parish dinners and picnics; yard sales and bazaars; and national religious festivals and pilgrimages.

We continue to pray for an end to the pandemic, for all who suffer illness, for those who care for them and provide essential services, for those who have died and for those who have lost loved ones. May Our Blessed Mother continue to intercede for us, for God's mercy and deliverance.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. Prendergast', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

✠ Terrence Prendergast, S.J.
Archbishop of Ottawa-Cornwall