



**ST. KATERI PASTORAL CENTRE**  
**ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WHITEHORSE**  
5119 – 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 1L5  
Phone: (867) 667-2052  
Fax: (867) 667-4713

Prot.#: 170320

March 17, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

**RE: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update**

To begin, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all the Priests, Lay Pastoral Associates and volunteers in our Diocese for their pastoral care and ministry during this global health situation. I am truly grateful also for our Yukon and British Columbia health officials and frontline medical staff who are working tirelessly to care for the sick and to mitigate the impact in our communities.

In response to the increasing concerns of transmission of the COVID-19 virus, and in addition to the information the Priests and Lay Pastoral Associates communicated to you last Sunday on my behalf, I would like to provide you with an update on preventative measures to be implemented immediately in the parishes and missions of the Diocese of Whitehorse. These measures are based on the latest requirements from the Yukon Chief Medical Officer of Health ([yukoncmoh.ca](http://yukoncmoh.ca)), the Yukon Health & Services Department ([yukon.ca](http://yukon.ca)), and BC Centre for Disease Control ([www.bccdc.ca](http://www.bccdc.ca)).

Gatherings in the Yukon and British Columbia have now been restricted to fifty (50) people to minimize the risk of spread. In order to adapt to this new requirement, churches will remain open and we will still hold our Sunday celebration of the Holy Eucharist and weekday Mass. **However, the number of attendees at each Mass will be limited to fifty.** To accommodate our Faithful as much as possible, churches will increase the number of celebrations of the Holy Mass as needed. Each parish priest or lay missionary family, in collaboration with parishioners, will decide on the practicality of how this will be done and will communicate accordingly.

Participation in the Holy Eucharist is central to our faith and there is no substitution. However, if you are 60 years old and over, or believe you are at risk of infection, and are thus concerned about attending Mass for health reasons, you may want to stay at home. There will also be those of you who cannot attend Mass due to virus symptoms, self-isolation requirements, or health restrictions beyond your control. In these cases, the obligation to attend Sunday Mass is lifted. Instead, Pope Francis invites you to unite yourself in Christ and to set for yourself a time to do the *Prayers of Spiritual Communion* (see the attached page), to read and reflect upon the Sunday readings, and to pray the Rosary. We also encourage you to watch Mass on TV ([dailytvmass.com](http://dailytvmass.com)). Please don't hesitate to contact your parish priest if you require more spiritual direction.

Regarding sacramental preparation and the celebration of other sacraments, the following changes are now in effect:

- All preparation classes for Baptism, First Holy Communion, First Reconciliation, Confirmation and Marriage are postponed until further notice. Couples may consult with their priest regarding individual marriage preparation classes.
- Only Baptisms and Marriages with the immediate family are allowed and are to follow provincial/territorial health requirements.
- Those who wish to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation should contact their pastor. It should be celebrated in a location to ensure a prudent distance while maintaining confidentiality and following safe environment guidelines.
- RCIA classes are suspended until further notice and information will be sent out to catechumens at a later date regarding reception into the Church.
- Anyone wishing to visit the sick or elderly in their homes or hospital, or those living in extended care facilities, need to follow the requirements of the provincial/territorial government and health facility.
- For funerals, the Funeral Mass and Rite of Committal will be celebrated only with immediate family. There will be no vigils or wakes.

A summary of all precautions to date is posted on the [Diocese of Whitehorse](#) website and will be updated as the need arises.

Thank you for your understanding and your care in this serious health matter. Please continue to keep all those affected in your prayers. I remain,

Yours in Christ,

+ 

---

Bishop Héctor Vila