



Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria

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MEMO

Date: June 30, 2021
To: Clergy, Parishes, Religious, Parishioners, and Staff
From: Bishop Gary Gordon
Re: BC Restart Plan Step 3

The B.C. government announced on June 29th that the Province would be moving to Step 3 of the Restart Plan on July 1, 2021. According to the information on the Restart Plan website (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/info/restart>), this means as of July 1st there will be “*no capacity limits or restrictions on religious gatherings and worship services*”.

We are sensitive to the fact that many parishes are eager to begin planning for upcoming Liturgies as soon as possible. The Province has not yet released any updated Health Orders, and as such, we do not currently know any more details. We will be monitoring the Province’s website carefully, and will send new General and Liturgical Directives as soon as possible after the new Health Order becomes available. While we await further information, the following abridged Directives are to be followed:

1. Parishioners in the Diocese of Victoria remain dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass at a church.
2. Before attending Mass, each person must carry out a health check. Any person who does not pass the health check must not attend Mass.
3. Face coverings are recommended for all people 12 and older who are not yet fully vaccinated (ie, two weeks have passed since their second vaccine dose). Some people will choose to continue to wear a face covering even after being fully vaccinated, and this choice must be respected.
4. Communion will continue be distributed on the hand only. If this is their custom, priests are to continue to refrain from breathing over the bread and wine for the consecration. The priest is not to share his Host with anyone.
5. Parishioners should continue to not to shake hands or hug each other, unless they are sitting together as a family unit. Continuing the sign of peace with a gesture, such as bowing, is recommended.
6. Holy Water and Baptismal fonts will continue to remain empty.

Covid is not over yet. Through these many months, we have learned that the practices we detailed in previous Directives, like physical distancing, good hand hygiene, mask wearing and enhanced cleaning and sanitizing, are effective tools to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. We encourage parishes to continue these practices as appropriate to keep our churches safe places to gather for our elders, people with vulnerabilities, and all members of our community.