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Date: February 24, 2022

To: Parishes, priests and deacons

From: Fr. Dan Van Delst, Chancellor

Re: Province of Ontario – Religious services update regarding the move to step-three of the gradually lifting COVID-19 restrictions

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**Religious services (include Mass, baptisms, weddings and funerals):**

There is good news for you regarding our Lenten journey. The Province of Ontario announced lifting capacity restrictions on March 1<sup>st</sup> as we move to the step 3 of the gradually lifting of COVID-19 restrictions.

This means that parishes can fully open on March 1<sup>st</sup>: you do not have to impose 2-meters physical distancing between households. Masks (facial coverings) continue to be required (except for those who have a valid medical exemption).

Starting March 1<sup>st</sup>, congregational singing will be allowed.

Archbishop Marcel is continuing the dispensation from the requirement to attend Sunday Mass for a period of time. Parishes are encouraged to continue livestream Masses during this time.

For Ash Wednesday, you may impose ashes on the forehead of individuals using a cotton ball or swab or you may use your thumb. The other option is to sprinkle the ashes on the head of the person as was suggested last year. You may use whichever means you feel most comfortable providing.

If you have not done so already, you might wish to consider placing your order for palms for Palm Sunday soon as we will be able to distribute them this year.

The WorshipSafe Guidelines are being updated. We will provide it to you once it becomes available.

Thank you for your continuing efforts in the parishes to observe the necessary health regulations. I know we are all pleased to see an opening of parishes with the possibility to gather together to celebrate our faith, especially, the sacraments, as we begin our Lenten season of preparation for the celebration of Easter!

Should you have any questions, please contact the Chancery.