



MEDIA ADVISORY:

In the midst of crisis & church closures, Archdiocese of Toronto offers spiritual support & outreach during Holy Week

TORONTO (April 3, 2020) — During the most sacred days of the year for Christians worldwide, the [Archdiocese of Toronto](#) would typically welcome hundreds of thousands of Catholics to its 225 churches for Holy Week services. This year, Holy Week will be different. With churches closed in an effort to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus, Catholics will not be able to pray inside their local parish in person. However, an abundance of effort and creative thinking are ensuring that the faithful can still be engaged in the holiest days of the year.

Virtual Outreach to the Faithful

Cardinal Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Toronto, will preside at all Holy Week services at St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica. These will be [live-streamed for the faithful](#) and [archived](#) for those who may wish to participate virtually. [Salt & Light Catholic Media Foundation](#), the [National Catholic Broadcasting Council](#) and [EWTN](#) will also offer televised services for the faithful without access to the internet. More than [60 GTA Catholic churches will livestream services](#) in more than 15 languages through a variety of social media channels.

In addition to spiritual services, Cardinal Collins will take part in a [FacebookLive chat](#) with parents and children on the Wednesday of Holy Week to answer their questions during this period of uncertainty. With many turning to their faith during this time of crisis, Cardinal Collins is also available to speak with the media to provide context in light of COVID-19, Holy Week and Easter as we collectively strive to support one another.

Local Support

While churches are physically closed, pastors and staff are still working diligently to provide care and outreach to their community. Hospital and hospice visits continue for many priests with parishes reaching out in unique ways – here are a few examples:

- [St. Mary's Parish, Brampton](#) – staff are reaching out through a personal phone call to every one of their 2,895 registered parishioners.
- [St. Mary's Parish, Barrie](#) – volunteers are dropping off missals so parishioners watching televised or online services can follow along.
- [St. André Bessette Parish in Vaughan](#) is using its Instagram feed for live prayers, Mass and Eucharistic adoration. The pastor has also taped selfies that his parishioners sent him onto chairs so they can be with him in spirit as he celebrates private daily Masses.
- Social justice ministries are finding creative ways to continue helping others. Some [St. Vincent de Paul](#) volunteers continue to distribute food vouchers, but they now slide them under the person's door instead of entering the residence. [Good Shepherd Ministries](#) in Toronto, normally serving a hot meal for the homeless, is relying on volunteers to assist with preparation of 700 bag lunches daily.



The Archdiocese of Toronto has developed a comprehensive website at: www.archtoronto.org/covid19 providing extensive spiritual resources, volunteer opportunities, links to provide financial support to parishes and a listing of livestream Masses and services. A full Holy Week schedule of services at St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica (closed to the public but offered via livestream) can be found below.

Holy Week 2020 Schedule — St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica

All services will be livestreamed via www.stmichaelscathedral.com and www.archtoronto.org – Cardinal Collins to preside at all services/events:

Sunday, April 5 - 10:00 a.m. Palm Sunday Mass

Sunday, April 5 – 7:00 p.m. Lectio Divina (Divine Reading – prayer with Cardinal Collins)

Tuesday April 7 - 10:00 a.m. Chrism Mass (renewal of priestly vows, blessing of holy oils)

Wednesday, April 8 – 11:00 a.m. Cardinal Collins – Facebook Live chat with children & parents ([Archdiocese of Toronto Facebook page](#))

Thursday April 9 - 7:00 p.m. Holy Thursday – Mass of the Lord's Supper

Friday, April 10 - 3:00 p.m. – Good Friday Passion of the Lord

Saturday April 11 - 7:00 p.m. Holy Saturday (Easter Vigil)

Sunday April 12 - 10:00 a.m. Easter Sunday

The Archdiocese of Toronto is Canada's largest diocese, stretching from Toronto to Georgian Bay and from Oshawa to Mississauga. It is home to more than two million Catholics and 225 churches, with Mass celebrated in 30 languages every week.

-30-

Media interested in speaking with Cardinal Collins, a parish priest or photographing/filming any St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica services are asked to liaise with our media contacts noted below.

Media Contacts:

Neil MacCarthy – Director, PR & Communications, m: 416-879-2846 neilm@archtoronto.org

Mark Brosens – Communications Manager, m: 647-389-5050 markb@archtoronto.org