



# DIOCESE OF ALGOMA

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From the Archbishop

March 8, 2021

To the People of God in Algoma,

Greetings in Christ! We are mid-way through Lent and we pray that God may continue to draw us closer in devotion and service this holy season. This week also marks the anniversary of the declaration of the pandemic (March 11<sup>th</sup>) and we know that it has been a long time to live with all the anxiety and uncertainty it has caused.

Our congregations are to be commended for their patience and care as we continue into the second year of the pandemic. We know that everyone wants to do the right thing and that sometimes it is difficult to discern what that is. Keeping our buildings closed is the safest option, but it is not without its consequences. We know that closures of all kinds can have a negative impact on mental health and on the economy, including our own offering plates. On the other hand, opening is still risky, as (at this writing) Ontario continues to post daily case-loads above 1,000, and as numbers of those “variants of concern” continue to rise.

Our desire is to keep everyone safe. We have seen that things can change very quickly and that there is no corner of our province that is immune to an outbreak. At the time of writing, there are still some parts of the Province in grey lockdown. Although the daily case numbers in the Province are lower than they were in January, they are still much higher than they were at the peak of the first wave of the pandemic, and now we have more contagious strains to contend with as well. Although a few of our clergy, lay leaders, and parishioners have already been vaccinated, the majority have not. If in-person services resume, some of our clergy and lay leaders, along with parishioners, might find it difficult to stay home and many of them are themselves in the highest risk categories for severe or fatal outcomes should they contract COVID-19.

After prayerful consideration, the Archbishop, together with the Archbishop's Council, is making the decision that our Diocese will not reopen our buildings for public worship in time for Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter, but will remain in the "RED" stage of our pandemic protocols until further notice. Our hearts are heavy that, for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Easter in a row, we cannot celebrate the resurrection in person as a family of faith. However, we are thankful that parishes are able to reach out in many creative and effective ways. Our buildings are closed; our churches are open!

While we do hope to return to the "AMBER" stage in the spring, we do not feel it is helpful at this stage to guess at a specific date when that might happen. Many of our cities, towns, and villages have seen first-hand how confusing it can be when the colour codes change so frequently, and we would prefer to open at a time when we feel reasonably optimistic that the "AMBER" stage can last.

For a quick reference to the protocols in place for our Diocese at this time, please visit the Diocesan website ([Updated RED Stage Protocols for Loving our Neighbours - February 16, 2021 | Diocese of Algoma](#)). Please remember that, when comparing our protocols with those of our local public health units, we must always follow the guidelines which provide the greatest protection.

We invite your prayers for those who are sick with this devastating virus, and for those who are working tirelessly to reduce its impact. May our congregations continue to be a witness to the Lord of love and the Lord of life as we humbly seek to follow where He leads.



The Most Rev. Anne Germond  
Archbishop of Algoma

*On behalf of Archbishop's Council*

*The Ven. Dr. Deborah Kraft, The Ven. Roberta Wilson-Garrett, The Ven. Glen Miller,  
The Ven. Joan Locke, The Ven. Kelly Baetz, The Very Rev. Jim McShane,  
The Ven. Dr. Jay Koyle, Mrs. Jane Mesich, Mrs. Liz Hamel*