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September 25, 2020

Mr. Gregory Kelley, MNA
620 Boulevard St. Jean, Bureau 200
Pointe-Claire QC H9R 3K2

RE: Quebec Government reclassification of Island of Montreal to Code Orange and the impact on religious worship

Dear Mr. Kelley

We are writing to you in your capacity as the Member of the National Assembly for the riding of Jacques-Cartier. We are the Fabrique of the Roman Catholic Parish of Corpus Christi, located in Senneville, and also serving the municipalities of Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue and Baie d'Urfé. All municipalities are within your riding.

The object of our letter is to condemn in the strongest possible terms the decision of the Government of Quebec regarding the classification of churches within the parameters of the "Orange" risk level applied to the Island of Montreal on Sunday, September 20, last.

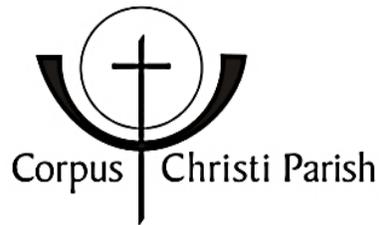
Since July 12, Corpus Christi Parish has received worshippers at weekend Masses according to strict protocols drawn up by our Deconfinement Committee, in accordance with both Diocesan policy and government regulations. Compliance with these protocols is monitored by a team of ushers at each Mass. These protocols may be viewed on our website at <http://corpuschristiparish.ca/>. There are no social events associated with these Masses.

It is inconceivable that the framers of such a policy would come to such a decision without consulting religious leaders across the province. In the absence of consultation, it is also inconceivable that they would come to such a decision without otherwise attempting to find out what happens in the real world of religious worship of the Province of Quebec. Accordingly, one has to wonder at the attitude that was brought to the table as these rules were drawn up.

The communique of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Quebec of September 24, states clearly the reality of religious worship in Quebec:

Gatherings in places of worship have nothing to do with "rooms where the service of alcoholic beverages is allowed" or those "where any event or any reception of a festive nature takes place," contrary to what is asserted in the 20 September statement by the ministry of health. What takes place in a place of worship is more akin to what takes place in a theater or a cinema.

To associate Masses with the behaviour observed in most bars is absurd. Limiting the attendance to 25 while permitting the limit at concerts, theatres and cinemas to remain at 250 goes beyond the absurd to the farcical. One is to assume from that decision that churchgoers regularly flout the regulations on sanitizing, masking and social distancing while participants



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at those other events are paragons of virtue. It is hard to imagine a group of civil servants and politicians, in this day and age, arriving at that conclusion.

The Government decision is not only ignorant of the comportment of worshippers at most religious venues, it also fails to recognize the value of worship to society at large but, in particular, during this period of the pandemic. I refer you, again, to the letter of Catholic Bishops of Quebec, which succinctly encapsulate this meaning:

For this reason, the rules imposed to places of worship last Sunday, without any prior dialogue, are disproportionate and infringe upon the freedom to worship. In these difficult times, hundreds of thousands of Quebecers find a source of meaning, comfort and resilience in their regular religious practices. Let us remember that this is one of their fundamental rights.

In conclusion, we reiterate the demands of the Quebec Interreligious Roundtable as stated by the communique of Quebec Assembly of Catholic Bishops:

That is why, in the absence of a specific category for places of worship, the members of the Quebec Interreligious Roundtable reiterate the demands they have expressed since Monday: "that government authorities reclassify places of worship in the category of concert halls, cinemas and theaters, which would allow us to continue welcoming a maximum of 250 people in our places of worship, instead of being limited to 25 or 50 people", while applying the protocols negotiated on 4 August 2020. They also request that "a frank and open channel of communication be established quickly between them and government authorities."

We ask that you as our representative in the parliament of Quebec bring our concerns to the proper authorities.

Sincerely,

The Fabrique of Corpus Christi Parish

Fr. Stephen Diraviam, Pastor
Wally Rowcliffe, Warden/Chair
Donal Irving, Warden/Secretary
Anne Parsons, Warden
Hank Bourdeau, Warden
Josiah Farrow, Warden
Shelby Hacala, Warden

DI/jcb