

To: Sanctuary staff
Religious communities
Members of the Hospitalité Notre Dame de Lourdes
Chaplains, priests, deacons and religious in the service of the Sanctuary

Dear Friends,

Our country and therefore each of us and our families are going through difficult times. This morning, the odious attack in the Basilica of Notre Dame de Nice is a forceful reminder of the security requirements that are never far from our thoughts, especially since the last recent attacks. In dialogue with security officials, I have decided that for the moment the only means of access to the Sanctuary will be via the St. Joseph's gate. The Prefect has assured me that armed forces will be present at this gate as they will be at many Catholic places of worship in France after the announcements made by the President of the Republic. We must not give in to fear. We have to be vigilant in spotting people behaving suspiciously. We have a high-performance CCTV system and I thank the guards for the work they do so efficiently even when they are sometimes subject to teasing from our visitors.

This evening at midnight a new period of lockdown begins for our country. I appreciate what this will mean for each of you. It is by scrupulously respecting the measures requested, and in particular when we are on site, wearing a mask and adopting other protective measures, that we will succeed together in combatting the disease. Several members of the work community in particular have been affected by or have been in contact with this virus. My thoughts and prayers are with them and I wish them a speedy recovery. Be assured that together with the chaplains and the management, we are attentive to each person's situation.

The Sanctuary management will shortly give you information that will be of use for the weeks to come. Until Sunday evening, public worship is permitted. We will therefore celebrate All Saints' Day in the presence of pilgrims who may be present, in accordance with the new rules in force. I hope that the Sanctuary will remain open as a strong sign at the heart of our Church. Of course, very few people will be able to come

here but we know how much the prayers of the chaplains during the first lockdown was a great support for many. These will start again on the morning of November 2. Those of you who wish to take part, in compliance, as always, with the conditions set by the containment regime, can send an email to the following address: prierecontinue@lourdes-france.com. The Grotto area will not be open to pilgrims; they will only be able to have access to the Rosary Basilica which will remain open like other churches in our country. There will be no Masses celebrated in public.

For this reason, I invite you to join via TV Lourdes the Mass at which I will be presiding at the Grotto on November 2 at 11:15 am for the deceased of our work community. Even though you will not be physically present, I invite you to unite in the same communion to entrust to God, in the hope of the Resurrection, those who have left us and to ask Mary to be a comfort for those who are affected by the passing of a loved one.

Dear friends, we are living in a time of uncertainty which disarms us. The Sanctuary of Lourdes is not just any place. It has meaning. It is here that so many eyes and hearts turn in difficult times. We have a mission to fulfil and I know you are committed to it. Thank you. Along with the Sanctuary management team, I am concerned that we are attentive to each other's situation. The email you received from Eric BROUARD on maintaining full-time wages until December 31 is one manifestation of this. Those who have not been back to the Sanctuary for many weeks are especially in my thoughts. Here again, let us not be overwhelmed by anxiety. I am also thinking of course of those, and there are many, who give themselves freely to make everything work as well as possible. They know how valuable their commitment is.

I have great confidence in the future. Trust in the Virgin Mary who asked us, and continues to ask us, to come here in procession. Confidence in our unity and solidarity which will allow us to overcome this difficult obstacle. Our season is coming to an end. It was unprecedented since without the effective presence of pilgrimages, we have welcomed hundreds of thousands of people who since May have passed through the Sanctuary. I hope they discovered here this so characteristic spirit that we all help to nurture: a spirit of peace, brotherhood, simplicity, care for the least of persons, prayer and reconciliation.

Let us continue to work together for the good of all and in particular those who live in Lourdes and its surroundings.

Let us hold onto the hope of seeing these happy and prayerful pilgrimages return. They will come back; I am sure of it and I can assure you of their desire to return to Lourdes as soon as possible.

Thinking of each one of you and thanking each of you for the part you play in our shared mission, I send you again my prayers and my warmest wishes.

Monseigneur Olivier Ribadeau Dumas
Recteur du Sanctuaire N-D de Lourdes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Olivier Ribadeau Dumas', with a horizontal line underneath.