

# All Souls' Day Mass will focus on victims of COVID-19 pandemic

Edmonton Archbishop Richard Smith will offer Mass for all victims of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 5:30 p.m. Mass will be celebrated at St. Joseph's Basilica on Nov. 2 – All Souls' Day, when Catholics gather as a community and Mass is offered for the dead, especially those lost in the past year.

"It's a very sensitive, painful time. To be able to come and offer that love, offer that grief, through the Mass, to the Lord is a great source of consolation," Archbishop Smith said.

"And this year, it is particularly poignant because of COVID. We know that here in this province, all over the country and throughout the world, many, many people have lost their lives because of COVID."

As of Oct. 28, the COVID pandemic claimed the lives of 313 people in Alberta. There have been 25,565 cases, of which more than 4,700 are considered active. The Alberta government also reports that 125 people are in hospital due to COVID, 19 of them in intensive care.

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops had suggested, after its June meeting, that local dioceses offer a Requiem Mass for COVID-19 victims and the Edmonton Archdiocese has taken that to heart.

"There is the natural grief of losing a loved one, compounded by all of the uncertainty and the anxiety and the stress that is inhabiting everybody now because of this," Archbishop Smith said. "The need to come together in faith for consolation and hope is only intensified because of what we're going through here with the pandemic."

The Requiem Mass will be celebrated with current COVID-19 protocols and livestreamed for those who are unable to attend in person. Archbishop Smith said it's an opportunity to come together as a Catholic community to remember everyone who has died, especially as a result of COVID.

"I would invite anybody who lost a loved one in the past year, for whatever reason but particularly if someone is acutely grieving because of the loss through COVID, to be part of this and to receive from the Mass – and from the knowledge that they are together with other members of the community – the consolation that only faith can give," Archbishop Smith said.

"I will be happy to lead the people in prayer to the Lord, but also to be one

with them, sharing in that prayer with them.”

The Requiem Mass can be viewed on Facebook, YouTube and on Telus Optik 876. It will be shared on the Archdiocese of Edmonton Twitter account as soon as the Mass begins.