

Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Winnipeg

Українська Католицька Архиепархія Вінніпеґу

Re: COVID – 19 Pandemic
Directive # 15 (18 December 2021)

Prot. H/114/2021

Glory be to Jesus Christ!

Слава Ісусу Христу!

To the Reverend Clergy and all the Faithful of the Archeparchy of Winnipeg:

This 'Directive' will take the form more of a brief memo as several of our clergy have requested a quick response as they want to inform their parishioners as soon as possible as to what to expect this Christmas season.

At 4:00 PM on Friday 17 December 2021, the Government of Manitoba issued a new Public Health Order (PHO) by which it calls for a number of restrictions, some of which will affect the pastoral and liturgical life of our parishes across the Archeparchy. You will find a copy of the "backgrounder" outline of the PHO attached to this Directive. The principal changes that it will affect in our parishes are the following:

1. The fundamental practices introduced in the earliest days of the coronavirus crisis – wearing of **masks**, the **sanitizing**/washing of hands and facilities, social **distancing**, recording **contact information**¹ and avoiding in-person attendance if one is **feeling ill**, etc. - must be maintained at all times.
2. As stated previously, our Liturgies are open to all regardless of vaccination status, and therefore the number of faithful attending regular parish liturgical services will be limited to **25 persons** (or 25% capacity of the facility, "*whichever is smaller*"). This number does not include the "essential staff" as explained in previous directives.²
3. If the parish has an adjacent or connected parish centre, auditorium or a similar space to which the same liturgy could be broadcast via live-stream, for example, then an additional "cohort" (or cohorts) could be accommodated in such additional facilities provided that the cohorts do not interact with each other. This would mean, among other things, entering and exiting by separate accesses or outlets.³
4. Although the parishes of the Archeparchy have consistently maintained high standards with regard to providing a safe environment for worship and pastoral activity, and will continue to do so, those members of the faithful that are truly concerned or are fearful for their wellbeing may excuse themselves from in-person participation. They may presume a temporary dispensation from the typical obligation of every member of the Church to personally attend liturgies on every Sunday and major feast day. However, for their spiritual wellbeing and growth – and that of their

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community – such persons are encouraged to remain full and active members of their parish as best they can. This would mean regular online participation in Liturgies and other meetings or activities. This would mean making their spiritual needs known to their pastor. Also, by supporting their parish financially and in other ways when they are unable to participate personally and directly in the life of their parish community.

5. As mentioned in the previous Directives, if a family or organization asks that a family religious occasion (e.g., baptism, wedding or funeral) or some other event be allowed to exceed the regular participation limitations mentioned in article 2 above, this may be arranged, but with the understanding that the parish pastoral leadership must first be consulted as to the practicability and exigency since the attendance would also be restricted only to those “fully vaccinated”. Furthermore, as it wouldn’t be a regular parish event as mentioned in point 2 above, it would be the responsibility of the family or organizers of the event to manage the implementation of the most recent PHO stipulations regarding inoculation *verification* (“proof of vaccination”) at the **entrance to the event**.
6. With regard to singing, we would also limit the leaders to two cantors or possibly individuals from the same household.

Conclusion.

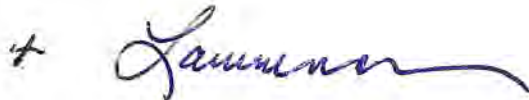
As a faith community, we are called to witness above all to our faith and to ever grow in that faith. We are called to reflect the Gospel message of Christ to overcome fear and to reach out in love and charity to all those around us and to see the world and life as the Author of Creation does see them Himself. We will continue to monitor both the needs of our parishes and the movement of the pandemic and associated restrictions. We will remain open to the proposals and queries of our clergy and faithful.

Regardless of our presumed social status out in the world, and regardless of our political and informational differences let us make every effort to gather together as the Lord would have us do. As we contemplate the Nativity of the Christ, we see the lowly shepherds and the majestic wisemen making their way together to the stable out back. We see a poor, but innocent and humble woman Mary with her somewhat bewildered, but loyal spouse Joseph – who is also humbly and totally obedient to God. All these individuals are called by God and are drawn to a new-born child Who will change the world forever. He will and does take away our fears and frustrations and calms our anger. He grants us grace and boldness together with a pure and holy love and mercy for all our brothers and sisters in Faith. This Christmas, let us not make it about anything else, but the **coming of Christ** into the world and into the lives and hearts and souls of each and every one of us.... never to abandon us ever.

I extend my prayers and blessing to each and every member of the Archeparchy this Christmas. I ask you to read carefully the **Christmas messages** of the Father and Head of our Church, His Beatitude **Sviatoslav** as well as the message issued by myself and

my fellow Ukrainian Catholic Bishops in Canada. Please also contemplate the seasonal messages of our Holy Father Pope Francis and of our Queen Elizabeth and others that you may come across this Christmas season. They will surely inspire your soul and raise your thoughts to heights beyond this pandemic that for too long has exhausted us not only physically, but especially emotionally and morally. We now have the occasion and a whole season to allow the Lord to lead us to new heights as we celebrate His **Nativity**, the **Theophany** and eventually the **Encounter**. By then, may it please God, our world will be a different place.

Sincerely in Christ,



Most Rev. Lawrence Huculak OSBM
Metropolitan



¹ These records are to be retained for private internal use of the parish and may be disposed of after two weeks.

² e.g., the clergy, cantor(s), server, Epistle Reader and funeral-home staff if it is a funeral, and photographer

³ By the present Health Order, this could provide for two or more groups of 25 persons each, but divided into separate "cohorts".