

Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Winnipeg Українська Католицька Архієпархія Вінніпегу

Re: COVID – 19 Pandemic
Directive # 13 (4 October 2021)

Prot. H/91/2021

Glory be to Jesus Christ! Слава Ісусу Христу!

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

We find ourselves already in the 19th month of the coronavirus pandemic and it is obvious that the end is not yet visible on the horizon. As your Archbishop I have been taking in all available information and new health orders to offer guidance for our Faithful throughout our parishes. It is important that these directives be seen as the authoritative norm for the spiritual good and physical safety within our Archeparchy.

LET US KEEP OUR FOCUS ON CHRIST

The first thing that we must do is lift up our hearts and souls to the Lord and hear His words: “Take heart, it is I; have no fear” (Matthew 14:27). The Lord is with us – even in the most troubling of times - and we need to renew this faith within us and share it with all those around us.

The second thing that we need to do is to renew within ourselves and within our parish communities a clear understanding of those most basic Commandments of the Lord – i.e., love of God and love of neighbour (Matthew 22:37-39). We who should be recognized by the love and respect that we show toward each other,¹ need to double down on our efforts to be charitable toward everyone with our communities and beyond. Our discussions and interactions with one another must be guided not by our personal fears or by a narrative suggested by outside sources, but by realistic concerns and our faith. The teachings of the Gospel message of Christ and the teachings of His mystical body – the Church - must be the primary source for our responding to any movement or crisis in society.

In the past, we have written at length about the basic safety protocols. Now again, weighing the concerns raised by our provincial government authorities, we have once again made adjustments to such matters as the number of individuals that may gather at our parish facilities as well what functions may or may not be permitted at this time.

STAYING UNITED IN OUR EFFORT TO LIVE OUR FAITH IN THE MIDST OF THE PANDEMIC.

One of the reasons for issuing this latest Directive is that some clergy and other faithful have asked for some guidance as media speculation about possible new waves and variants heightens our concern. There has also been some inquiry as to how the most recent public health order, which significantly mentions “faith-based gatherings”,² may affect life in our parishes.

Our many “directives” and “clarifications” since March of 2020 have been crucial in assessing all governmental advisories and media information to formulate for ourselves the best norms for our Archeparchy.

These directives will allow our communities to maintain an active parish life while keeping our faithful safe and adhering to those provisions of our provincial health authorities that may pertain to us. We hope that our parish priests together with their parish councils will strive to implement a strategy that will allow for maximum participation of all the faithful. Christian charity and a renewed dedication to the goals of the Church will help in any deliberations and planning.

REVISIONS TO THE DIRECTIVES

At this time, I ask that:

1. For all Liturgical, Sacramental and other prayer services associated with our parishes - the maximum number of participants will respect the most recent Manitoba Public Health Order of 33% of the capacity of the church or facility.³
2. For the time being, we will continue to make a distinction for **WEDDINGS, FUNERALS** and **BAPTISMS**. In these cases – for both the ritual aspect in church and any fellowship reception in a different parish facility - the participation should be limited to **25** persons.⁴
3. Some record of contact tracing information should be gathered and maintained for at least two weeks after the event. This is confidential information for use if ever some health concern arises in connection with the congregation being exposed in some way to the coronavirus. If it becomes problematic to have a designated person(s) at the entrance, then a voluntary sign-up sheet may be used that will include the name, surname and telephone number of each individual attending the event.
4. Although one will *not* be asked if they are vaccinated or to produce some sort of proof, it must be understood that any individual will *not* attend a **service** or parish **function** if:
 - they are experiencing any Covid-like symptoms,
 - they have been in close contact with a confirmed case of Covid-19
 - they have travelled outside of the province in the last two weeks⁵
 - they have submitted for a test and are awaiting the result.
5. **MASKS** should be worn at all times for parish liturgical events or other parish functions⁶ and sanitizer is to be easily accessible around the church or facility and its use should be encouraged. **SOCIAL DISTANCING** should be maintained at all times and extended social gathering cannot happen at this time.⁷ Appropriate **SANITIZING** of the church/facility should be done following an event according to the manner of how the facility was used and the number of participants.
6. **SINGING**, being essential to the religious practice of our faith, is permitted, but preferably with only one or two singers that are appropriately socially distanced from the other congregants. If a party of singers are from *the same household* and sing at their own microphone, they may be considered as "one". Other people in the congregation may sing along albeit quietly and while wearing their **masks**. Parishes that want to restart their choirs should formulate a plan that would respect the typical Covid-19 protocols and submit the plan to the Chancery for prior review.

7. Our clergy are asked, if it is feasible and if it would prove beneficial for the faithful, to consider adding an additional Sunday service to accommodate all the faithful that desire to attend in person while not exceeding the recommended number of participants.
8. The **DISPENSATION** from the obligation⁸ to participate *in-person* at Sunday and Feast Day liturgies will continue for those members of our faith that are sincerely concerned that attending in-person may put their health or the health of loved ones at risk. All the faithful are reminded that we are all bound to fulfil our obligations to our Lord and His Church by participating, at least, in livestreaming liturgies and supporting our parish in its needs.
9. Non-parish functions and events will be subject to the standing rules occasionally revised by government Public Health Orders as pertaining to “public gatherings”. This would include groups or individuals that “rent” or otherwise are granted the use of parish facilities for a function that is not *directly* connected to the life and mission of the parish and its organizations (e.g. banquets, cultural groups, wedding receptions, fundraisers, etc.)

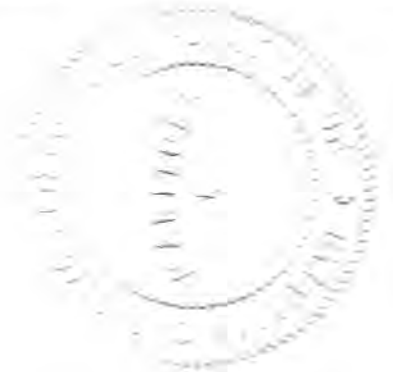
I ask that Pastors and parish Administrators in collaboration with their Parish Pastoral Councils always approach the ever-shifting restrictions with calm, goodwill and true Christian kindness. The Church has experienced times much more challenging than these current times. We always want to attend to the Lord’s mandate to share the faith with all those around us⁹. These circumstances give us an opportunity to shine with the virtues of faith, hope and love - the example that our society desperately needs at this time. If we do not forget our vocation as followers of Christ and if we strive to adhere to common sense in all matters and strive to exhibit love of God and Neighbour throughout all adversity, we will truly shine through these difficult times.

Know that you are constantly in my prayer. I know that we will all travel through this difficult period together by trusting in our Lord and by keeping our focus on our role in the mission of Christ’s Church and by fulfilling that role as best we can.

Sincerely in Christ,



Most Rev. Lawrence Huculak OSBM
Metropolitan



¹ John 13:35

² Government of Manitoba - [Changes to Public Health Order](#) (1 October 2021)

³ This number would not include the ‘essential staff’ or children *under* 12 years of age. By general calculation, this would mean that a church with a 100-person capacity could host 33 people, if 200, then 66, if 300, then 99, etc.

⁴ This number would not include the liturgical staff or funeral home staff or children *under* 12 years of age.

⁵ The Provincial regulations do make some exceptions in ‘[Self Isolation Exemptions](#)’.

⁶ This would include events like - meetings, religious education sessions, and including some occasions where refreshments and food are offered in a safe manner as a direct part of the parish event.

⁷ e.g., chatting outside the church for longer than 10 minutes [c.f. [Covid-19 Screening Questions](#) (September 2021), B.1.]

⁸ [Particular Law UGCC](#) (2018), Canon 114

⁹ Matthew 28:19-20.