

Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Winnipeg Українська Католицька Архiepархія в Вінніпеґу

COVID - 19 Pandemic Archeparchy Directive # 7

Clarification/Commentary No. 4 – “Theophany”

2 January 2020

Prot. H/01/2021

As the feast of Theophany¹ approaches, there have been several inquiries concerning directives as how best to provide an experience of the rich traditions of the **blessing of water** and the **blessing of homes** that are associated with this major feast.

Needless to say, that the best practice is to follow the basic health directives and public health orders presently in effect and which have been reflected in the Archeparchial Covid-19 Directives. These directives presently limit the number of participants to *essential* personnel (e.g. clergy, cantors, servers),² and stress social distancing and require the wearing of masks.

Based on information from sister eparchies and taking a common sense approach to the situation that now exists in Manitoba, the following suggestions should be taken into consideration.

1. A prudent decision for a parish may be to postpone the water blessing itself until the dynamics of the pandemic within the Archeparchy changes and full confidence may be felt by all.
2. Given the spiritual/emotional climate in a particular parish, the Pastor may decide to perform the water blessing, but with no physical contact with the water. The prayers would be expressed without the prescribed use of candles, breath, hand and cross.

However, if the pastor and his team decide to have the blessing of water as is customary on this feast, the following points must be considered:

3. **Masks** should be worn by anyone closely involved with the water blessing
4. Instead of breathing on the water, a **chalice cover** or a **deacon’s ripidion** or some similar item may be used to create a disturbance in the air over the water.³
5. The items used for blessing - that actually come into physical contact with the water – should be **sanitized** prior to (and after) use. This would mean the candles, the cross and the hands of the priest.

¹ The Baptism of the Lord; Epiphany

² Therefore, if the plan is to distribute the Holy Water to the parishioners, it must be done separate from the rite of blessing itself as to avoid excessive numbers of people present.

³ Genesis 1:2

6. If more convenient, the priest may don surgical *or other latex* **gloves** prior to the blessing or prior to actually immersing them into the water.
7. The faithful can be encouraged to bring their **own container of water** that will be opened and blessed by the sprinkling of the holy “Jordan” water over the container.
8. If possible, following the blessing, the “Jordan” Water may also be poured into **small containers** that the Faithful may retrieve them individually in a safe manner.⁴
9. The Faithful should be encouraged to **bless their own homes** this year. The text of a **home-blessing prayer** may be provided them that they may pray as a family/household.

Most Rev. Lawrence Huculak
Metropolitan

⁴ If the parish is arranging for their donation envelopes or other pastoral materials to be delivered to the homes of their members, a small container of Jordan water may be passed along at the same time. Otherwise, an appropriate method of pick-up from the parish office or the church itself should be arranged.