

Re: COVID – 19 Pandemic

Archeparchy Directive # 9 (27 April 2021)

Prot. H/20/2021

To the Reverend Clergy, Religious Sisters and Laity of the Archeparchy of Winnipeg:

Christ is Risen!

Христос Воскрес!

Although the appropriate adaptation to the occasionally changing governmental health orders in the fight against the coronavirus may seem obvious to some, it will be helpful to clarify how they apply to church life within the Archeparchy. Just yesterday, 26 April 2021, our Manitoba government officials held a press conference during which they announced the latest social restrictions that would take effect for one month from Wednesday 28 April 2021. [See attached 'Backgrounder']

Our Interpretation and application of the latest Manitoba Government Covid-19 restrictions (26 April 2021) includes the following directives:

GATHERINGS AT CHURCHES AND PARISH FACILITIES may occur with a participation of up to 25% or 10 participants – whichever amounts to the lower number. This number has not included the “essential” facilitators of the event (e.g. clergy, cantor, reader, usher(s) and livestreaming ‘team’). However, unless those within this essential group are absolutely necessary, they should not exceed 5 individuals.

Once the quota is filled in advance, no others may be permitted to enter the premises for the duration of the event.

The reception of the **SACRAMENTS** outside of ‘religious gatherings’ or ‘Worship events’ may still be arranged, however, as previously explained, by appointment and on an individual basis and as long as all Archeparchial Covid and Safe-Environment protocols are observed.

BAPTISMS, FUNERALS (including INTERMENT) and **MARRIAGE** follow the same regulations as mentioned above for “Gatherings”. If held at a funeral home or cemetery, the regulations adhered to in those places should be adhered to.

REMEMBER that it is always presumed that besides ‘numbers of participants’ all other precautionary measures must be followed, including: proper sanitizing of hands and spaces, social distancing, recording of contact information, wearing of **MASKS** (presently at all times), pre-screening of participants (in advance online or at the door), separate entrance/exit, etc.

LOVE OF GOD AND NEIGHBOUR (Mt 22:36-40) must be the motivation that guides all activity and decision-making in our parishes. Keep in mind that these restrictions not only put a burden on parish life, but on our families as well. Let parishes also explore how they may reach out to and help individual parishioners that now may have even more limited contact with loved ones and limited access to what they need to survive.

Like all faith communities, we are disheartened regarding these new restrictions. We know that our parishes that follow the Julian Calendar will feel especially dejected as we enter Holy Week and prepare for the Easter celebrations. Catholic leaders in Manitoba have noted the seeming bias or excessive precautions when it comes to faith communities and we have raised these issues with our health authorities. However, for now, we must insist that our parishes adhere to the protocols presented by our elected government leaders and follow directives as issued by our Archeparchy.

May the Lord in His kindness and mercy, bring us all through this pandemic safely and as a better people.

Most Reverend Lawrence Huculak

Metropolitan