

Glory be to Jesus Christ!

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

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES

1. With the continuation of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the policies given in our Directive # 2 (19 March 2020) are still in effect. This directive is in compliance with the restrictions given by the civic and health authorities including limiting gatherings to **under 10 persons**.
2. With the continued closure of church services to the public, the faithful are reminded that the parish clergy are to continue to celebrate the Divine Liturgy and other liturgical services for the spiritual benefit of the faithful. This is especially true for the Divine Liturgies for Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. The use of social media platforms to transmit these liturgies, including live-streaming and *You Tube*, are of ultimate importance.
3. Where possible the specific **Liturgical Services of Holy Week** are to be celebrated as just mentioned. However, due to the present limitations it is possible for clergy to celebrate only portions of these services electronically, transmitting the key liturgical texts and offering a spiritual reflection on the theme of the service.
4. The **PLASCHANYTSYA** or **BURIAL SHROUD** can be placed in the usual location in churches, but with **no procession**. Veneration on an individual basis is permissible, but always maintaining the required limit of persons. In addition, the burial shroud should **not be kissed** or **touched**, rather a profound bow can be made before it. A barrier should be placed in front of the shroud to prevent physical contact.
5. **SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION / CONFESSION** will continue to be made available to the faithful, but on **an individual basis**. Group preparations can only be done via the internet, but not in churches. Pastors should indicate to parishioners **when and where** they are available for Confessions. A distance of 2 meters must be maintained between priest and penitent.

In spite of their sincere desire to avail themselves of one of the *limited* opportunities to Confess their sins at this confusing time of crisis, if the faithful are unable to do so, they should also be reminded of the concept of a **Perfect Act of Contrition**. This, of course, refers to the situation when “a penitent sincerely regrets his/her sins, not out of fear of God’s just punishment, but because of having offended our Loving Lord. Such a sincere ‘perfect act of contrition’ can permit a person to receive Holy Communion – under the condition that the person sincerely desires to amend his/her life and at the first available opportunity the person must make a proper Sacramental Confession”.¹

6. **Reception of HOLY COMMUNION** is especially important during the Easter season. As with the Sacrament of Reconciliation, parish priests should provide opportunity for the faithful to receive Holy Communion on an individual basis, informing them when this will be possible in the church or another suitable location (e.g. church hall), again, **maintaining the required limits on gatherings of people**. If we are unable to receive the Holy Eucharist in the form of consecrated bread and wine, we can make a **Spiritual Communion**, a practice our faithful carried out in Ukraine during the Communist era. For Spiritual Communion we unite ourselves in prayer with the Lord, especially during the live transmission of the Divine Liturgy, we express sorrow for our sins, pray the communion prayers, and ask the Eucharist Lord to come into our hearts. Pope Saint John Paul II wrote: “it is good to cultivate in our hearts a constant desire for the sacrament of the Eucharist. This was the origin of the practice of ‘spiritual communion’” (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 34).
7. **RESURRECTION MATINS** are to take place *within* the church, using the royal doors of the iconostasis in place of the church doors for the opening rituals.
8. **BLESSING OF WILLOWS AND EASTER BASKETS** should primarily be done via the *live-streamed* liturgies, where with the intention of the celebrant, the blessing applies to these items in homes or where ever the faithful have them. The prayer of blessing is the key element in these sacramental rituals, even without the use of holy water. The faithful who have holy water in their homes may sprinkle it on these items having participated in the prayer via internet or even saying the prayer together as a family.

Only where it is **safe** and **following restrictions on gatherings**, Willows and Easter Baskets may be blessed by parish priests *outside* the church.

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

As we approach these important days in the Church calendar, when we relive the passion, death and resurrection of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, my prayer is that you will find an *even deeper* spiritual appreciation for the Pascal Mystery this year in the darkness of the COVID-19 pandemic. May Christ, Physician of body and soul, keep you in good physical and spiritual health, affirmed by the light of his holy Resurrection.

In Christ, Most Rev. **Lawrence Huculak OSBM**, Metropolitan

¹ Cf. [Letter of His Beatitude Sviatoslav with Recommendations as to how to serve the Holy Week and Easter Services During the Covid-19 Pandemic](#) (24 March 2020), n. 7