

Re: COVID – 19 Pandemic**Archeparchy Directive # 6 (1 October 2020)****Glory be to Jesus Christ!**

Prot. H/90/2020

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

On Friday, 25 September 2020, Dr. Brent Roussin, the chief provincial public health officer, announced certain restrictions due to COVID-19 for some areas of Manitoba, effective Monday, September 28. These restrictions are to be understood in light of the provincial pandemic program issued 19 August 2020, entitled: **RESTART MB, Pandemic Response System**. This document, **RESTART MB**, is very detailed and extensive. The same government official issued a detailed special measures entitled “**Orders under The Public Health Act**” which were also approved by Manitoba’s Health Minister, the Honourable Cameron Friesen.

The purpose of this **Archeparchy Directive #6** is to point out the areas of particular concern to Archeparchy parishes and faithful. After highlighting some of the pertinent focuses from the two documents, specific directives are given below that will complement and further clarify the instructions issued in the previous **Directives #5**.

RESTART MB establishes 4 levels of pandemic activity, each with a particular symbol and colour:

- a **green** circle entitled: LIMITED RISK;
- a **yellow** triangle entitled: CAUTION;
- an **orange** diamond entitled: RESTRICTED
- a **red** eight-sided symbol *[like a stop sign]* entitled: CRITICAL

RESTART MB also lists numerous activities, locations, events, etc. and outlines what is permitted or restricted in these categories, depending on the colour level they are in.

For the Archeparchy there are three main headings which we need to monitor.

1) PUBLIC GATHERINGS *“Public health guidance about public gatherings applies to social gatherings, **worship**, weddings and funerals ... and spiritual events. Gatherings must follow public health guidelines for the venue where they are being held. Gathering organizers are asked to keep groups contained, and not let new people enter as other people leave. This is to ensure contact tracing can be done if someone tests positive for COVID-19.”*

At the **Yellow CAUTION** level, the document among other points notes:

- *“For faith-based gatherings, pow wows and other cultural and spiritual events, the site capacity will be a maximum of 30 per cent or 500 people, whichever is lower.”*
- *“This change does not apply to social gatherings, weddings and funerals, or other organized gatherings or events. These gatherings must follow public health guidelines for the venue where they are being held.”*

At the **Orange RESTRICTED** level, the only instruction states: *“Further restrictions on group sizes and cohorts will be required at all times.”*

The newly published **“Orders Under the Public Health Act (28 September 2020)”** issued by the Government of Manitoba, differentiates between worship services and “weddings and funerals”. For services, it is clear that with certain precautions 50 persons or even two or more “groups” of 50 persons may attend. But for funerals and weddings only 10 persons or additional groupings of 10 persons may attend. It seems clear that the government is issuing a blanket order for weddings and funerals of all faith groups regardless of the varying nature of the events in various faith traditions and/or caution is made, because at such events emotions could contribute to a forgetting of the importance of adhering to safety protocols.

NB: The term “cohort group” or “sub-groups” is used to describe additional groups being allowed at a given location, but which would have no contact with the main group. Thus, the cohort group would use separate entrance/exits, separate wash rooms, and could not receive Holy Communion via the main group.

2) COMMUNITY CENTRES *“Community centres include multi-purpose facilities such as church basements, arenas and town halls.”*

At the **Yellow CAUTION** level, the document among other points notes: *“Community centres and other multi-purpose facilities such as arenas and town halls must have an indoor occupancy level. The maximum number of people permitted per site is 50, except where groups of 50 can be separated to prevent contact with other groups through the use of separate exits and/or staggered drop off schedules and monitoring the facility to avoid congestion and inter-mingling of groups in common areas. The maximum size of gatherings with sub-groups should not exceed 30 percent of the site’s capacity, to a maximum of 300.”*

At the **Orange RESTRICTED** level, the only instruction states: *“Facilities may only be able to operate at reduced capacity.”*

3) RESTAURANTS AND OTHER PUBLIC FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS

Although this section in the RESTART MB document does not refer to food preparation, distribution or consumption on church property [basements or halls] it does list important requirements that must be followed on church locations.

CONCLUSIONS AND ARCHEPARCHIAL DIRECTIVES

1. The document **RESTART MB** can be difficult to understand due to its length and complexity. However, we are able to establish the following regulations for the faithful and facilities of the Archeparchy and believe that they fully respect the Manitoba government orders and provide for the pastoral needs of our faithful at this time.
2. As of September 28, the city of Winnipeg and area will be in the **ORANGE RESTRICTED** level. Furthermore, Orders Under the Public Health Act were also issued on that same date by competent authorities within the Government of Manitoba. Both of these decisions affect our parishes within the “Capital/Metropolitan Region” (defined as: Winnipeg; Selkirk; Niverville; Stonewall; Teulon; Dunnottar; and the R.M.s of Cartier; East St. Paul; West St. Paul; Headingley; Macdonald; Ritchot Rockwood; Springfield; St. Andrews; St. Clements; St. François Xavier; and Tache). However, unless otherwise determined, these directives will pertain to parishes throughout the Archeparchy.
3. The **Archeparchy Directive #5**, issued 26 May 2020, remains in effect, other than the adjustments made in this **Archeparchy Directive #6**.
4. Persons, not exceeding 30% of the church’s normal capacity – including, clergy, cantors, ushers and servers – may be permitted at each parish liturgical service, if all precautions are provided for. This means:
 - **registering** each attendee (*on-site or preferably by pre-registration*) at least with name and telephone number. *[The information should be maintained for at least 2 weeks in the event that tracing may be required.]*
 - **verifying**, by means of the basic questions (*asked in-person or online*), that each potential attendee is not ill, has not travelled, has not been in contact with persons infected with Covid-19
 - providing a **separate Entrance and Exit** for the attendees *[with an exception made for the elderly and handicapped that may need a certain feature – e.g. elevator or ramp. However, the feature is to be appropriately sanitized between uses by different individuals/groups]*
 - ensuring that **safe-distance** (*2 metres*) can be maintained at all times in the church
 - ensuring that the church can be adequately **sanitized** before the next service *[washroom facilities should also be included in this consideration]*

- providing **sanitizer** - for hands and pews – to the participants
5. The use of masks is **required** for all participants attending churches situated within the areas listed in point 2 above, and *highly recommended* for all our churches in the province of Manitoba.
 6. Wedding ceremonies (Crownings) and funeral services are permitted in churches. However, under the present circumstances the number of participants is to be restricted to 10 persons, including the clergy and cantor. Otherwise, if appropriate, such events may be postponed until a time when the restriction directives change.
 7. For the Archeparchy of Winnipeg, **food preparation**, distribution and consumption is permitted on church property provided that all provincial COVID-19 health directives are observed, the person in charge has a Canada Health Food Handlers certificate, and the parish priest and parish council are in agreement.
 8. Parish organizations may also meet with the in-person participation not exceeding 10 members. With regard to Catechism classes, as the best practice yet remains unclear, parishes may proceed with a Catechism program, but with special care regarding health protocols and maintaining subgroups of not more than 10 students.
 9. The parish priest together with the parish council is to authorize all issues related to parish activities during this pandemic.

Please continue to practice frequent hand sanitization, maintain physical distancing, and do remember in your prayers all those suffering from the effects of this pandemic and that, by the grace and mercy of our Lord, it will soon all pass.

Most Reverend Lawrence Huculak
Metropolitan