

Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Winnipeg Українська Католицька Архієпархія в Вінніпеґу

Covid-19 – Archeparchy of Winnipeg Directive # 18

3 March 2022

Prot.: H/09/2022

To the Clergy, Religious and Lay-Faithful of the Archeparchy of Winnipeg

Слава Ісусу Христу! Glory to Jesus Christ!

“Where two or three are gathered in my name,” the Lord tells us, ***“there am I in the midst of them”***. These are words that call us to join together as brothers and sisters in prayer and worship and, at the same time, they assure us of our Lord’s presence when we do so. After the long period of time since a pandemic was declared almost two years ago,¹ the general approach in responding to the coronavirus Covid-19 is shifting dramatically.² In collaboration with local health authorities – to ensure the safety of our parishioners - our Archeparchy as all religious groups around the globe-maintained health safety measures in our parishes.

Within the Archeparchy of Winnipeg, in collaboration with other eparchies and dioceses across the country, we have maintained every possible precaution as advised by health authorities while maintaining the spirit of the mission of our Church. We have issued directives over the past two years that were always adjusted according to the ever-shifting public health orders. We insisted that parishes maintain a safe environment for their parishioners – especially for the elderly and others deemed to be “most at risk” of contracting the virus. This, of course has been challenging and even exhausting for the faithful and the clergy who serve them. Some parishes were able to formulate teams and methods to provide maximum participation – as limited as that was at times - while other parishes were forced to close almost entirely to the public. Needless to say, this has taken its toll on pastoral life around the province and some parishes have experienced real hardship in this period.

We look forward to moving into a new phase. Much has been learned about the coronavirus with each passing month. We have monitored how the virus spreads and metamorphoses into new variants. We have learnt to discern where we should be especially cautious and where we need not be as worried as long as proper measures are observed.

Once again, our Manitoba Provincial Government public health authorities have adapted restrictions related to the coronavirus as they deem the threat to be greatly reduced.³ As we have done in the past, we want to adjust the Covid-19 protocols within our Archeparchy and, in particular, within our parishes. Although the following directives will,

for the most part, supersede all previous directives, we ask that earlier directives be consulted when questions arise with regard to the implementation of particular matters.

1. Participation.

Presently all parish religious events – Liturgies, prayer services, pastoral events, retreats, faith education, etc. – will not be restricted with regard to the **number** of participants or **vaccination status**. Other precautionary restrictions will apply, however, as outlined below.

2. Precautions

- Until further notice, **MASKS** will be **required** at any indoor parish gathering, including for clergy.
- Sanitizing posts with **hand sanitizer** and **wipes** should be available at the entrance to the church or other parish gathering facility.
- Anyone who has recently **travelled** outside Canada or who has been **in contact** with someone diagnosed with Covid-19 or some other similar health issue, should avoid in-person participation at parish events for at least 5 to 10 days after the travel or contact.

3. Practices

- Single-use **WOODEN UTENSILS** (spoons, sticks, etc.) should still be used for the distribution of Holy Communion. However, the practice of reusable metal spoons that are used one-per-person and then appropriately sanitized after the Divine Liturgy may also be an option.⁴ Other methods may be used, but the actual scientific safety must be verified and its acceptance among the majority of the parishioners must be considered before implementation.
- The church **COLLECTION** may be resumed at parish services.
- **ALTAR SERVERS** and **GIRLS OF MARY** and other similar groups may resume, but with the permission of the parents and initially in limited numbers.
- Parishes that have implemented **LIVESTREAMING** are asked to maintain this practice. This will continue to be a blessing for shut-ins, those in homes and hospitals and those who are otherwise unable to attend in-person.
- Parishes that had the practice of dispensing **HOLY WATER** via a font, may resume doing so.

4. Dispensation.

Early in the pandemic, it was deemed appropriate to declare a general dispensation from the fundamental obligation to attend Sunday and feast-day services. The fundamental reasoning behind granting such a dispensation was to encourage people to stay at home and not endanger themselves at a time when little was known about the virus and how contagious it is and how lethal.

Our better understanding of how to deal with Covid-19 and the global shift toward the lifting of restrictions moves us to rescind the general dispensation from personal attendance at liturgical services on “days of obligation”. This should not cause alarm for anyone, as we, of course, know from our basic catechism that we in good conscience may refrain from participating in the Sunday Divine Liturgy if a variety of circumstances arise – such as illness, emergencies, conflicting and unavoidable work schedule, etc. Of course, in such circumstances an alternative solution should be sought and the special day should be observed in all other ways. These customs are essentially regulated by what is known as the “particular law” of our Church which is quoted in the appendix to this directive.

5. Cautious and Respectful Renewal

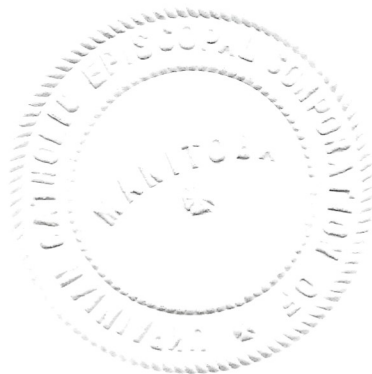
These changes will surely bring a goodly amount of joy to the hearts of all of us as we can now slowly start to revitalize parish pastoral and social activity. However, not a few will feel a sense of hesitancy to rush into pre-pandemic situations and understandably so. We must be cognisant of the concerns of parishioners who will want to re-enter according to their personal experience and concerns. As always, due respect toward everyone and fundamental Christian charity will be the right approach.

We don't know what the future holds. In fact, the latest Public Health Order runs only until the 15th of March. However, we want to move forward with cautious optimism praying the Lord to watch over us and guide us. May we focus on experiencing the Great Fast as fully as possible as we prepare for the celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord. Needless to say, we in particular want to raise our prayer to our Lord for our brothers and sisters in Ukraine at this terrifying time of trial.

Sincerely in Christ,



Most Rev. Lawrence Huculak, OSBM
Metropolitan



Appendix – Days of Obligation

The last revision of this particular law of the Ukrainian Catholic Church was promulgated in 2018. They give us some guidance as to what are the days of obligation on which we – to the best of our ability - are “*required to participate in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and abstain from heavy physical work*”.⁵ These days include, “*all Sundays*, the *patronal feast* of [our] own parish, and the following twelve feasts:

1. The Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos (Sept. 8/21);
2. The Universal Exaltation of the Honourable and Life-giving Cross (Sept. 14/27);
3. The Entrance into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos (Nov. 21/Dec. 4);
4. The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Dec. 25/Jan.7);
5. The Theophany of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Jan. 6/19);
6. The Encounter (Presentation) of Our Lord (Feb. 2/15);
7. The Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos (Mar. 25/Apr.7);
8. The Entrance of the Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday);
9. The Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ;
10. The Descent of the Holy Spirit (Sunday);
11. The Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Aug. 6/19);
12. The Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos(Aug. 15/28);”⁶

¹ March 11, 2020. cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19_pandemic

² Health authorities around the world and in our own country are ushering in a new phase of social response to the Covid-19 crisis. The Provincial Government of Manitoba has announced what can only be seen as a major easing of restrictions (28 February 2022) Other provinces have all but lifted all restrictions and mandates. The national Public Health Authority of Canada (PHAC) released a statement that acknowledges the reality that we must all accept, “that COVID-19 will be with us for the foreseeable future”. However, based on what has been learned about Covid-19 over the past two years as well as the positive and negative efforts in trying to control its spread in society, the PHAC statement explains that the trend will now be to maintain due health safety precautions. However, we will see a “shift from public health mandates to *guidance* and *recommendations*”. Nestled in several paragraphs of conveying an abundance of caution, the statement expresses that which we too take to heart, “it is an opportune time to take a broad perspective and map out our path forward as we look towards the spring and brighter days ahead”. Cf. Statement from the Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health (CCMOH), 14 Feb 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html>

³ https://manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/proactive/20212022/orders-soe-02282022.pdf

⁴ Care should be taken that alcohol or other sanitizing solutions are respectfully disposed of in the sacarium or by other appropriate means for the disposal of sacred elements.

⁵ cf. Particular Law of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, c. 114.

⁶ *ibid*