



March 19, 2020

Pandemic Preparation Liturgical Protocol No. III for the novel coronavirus COVID-19

Introduction

Continuing to monitor information and direction on a daily basis from the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living and the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, Dr. Brent Roussin, the Archdiocese has decided to implement the following protocol which builds upon previous protocols. It includes all that was previously stated in Protocol I and II, as well as superseding certain prior directives as dictated by continuing developments.

This protocol is **effective immediately** and will be maintained until such time as the Archdiocese indicates that it is returning to the regular liturgical practice.

A) Celebration of the Mass and Access to the Eucharist

1) Assemblies

Assemblies for Sunday masses and celebrations of solemnities (i.e. Holy Week celebrations) are cancelled until the end of April 2020. For the duration of this period, I grant to all the Catholic faithful of the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface dispensation from their Sunday obligation (*cf. Code of Canon Law, 87*). All pastors are of course to celebrate the Sunday mass (privately or with a very very small group of people) for all their parishioners (i.e. *pro populo*). They may consider livestreaming their celebration of the mass to their parishioners if the parish is equipped to do so.

2) Eucharistic Fast

The Sunday celebration of the Eucharist is the very heart of our Catholic life, and I realize that this directive will be a cause of great suffering. However, we observe this as our civic duty at this time, and offer this moment in sacrifice to God for the sake of all who are ill from the COVID-19 virus, united in prayer for all, especially the frail and vulnerable as well as all front-line health care providers.

3) Participation in the Eucharist at a Distance

During this period, the Archdiocese will livestream Sunday masses and Holy Week celebrations. Starting this Sunday, a mass in French will be offered at 9:00 AM, and a mass in English will be offered at 10:30 AM, on the diocesan



Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/ArchSaintBoniface/>. I will be presiding this Sunday; other priests may preside at other times.

Some individual parishes are also planning to offer a livestream Sunday mass. We shall make links to those available on our Website as they are provided to us. In addition, you may participate in the Eucharist remotely by tuning in to daily mass on Salt & Light TV or Vision TV, or online at <https://dailytvmass.com>

4) **Weekday Masses**

Assembling for weekday masses is also cancelled. This will also be so throughout the Archdiocese of Winnipeg. The priests are to celebrate daily mass privately.

5) **Access to Churches for Prayer and Eucharistic Adoration**

Parishes are encouraged to keep their churches open each day of the week for an extended period of time (e.g. from 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM, or as feasible) to allow individuals and families to come and pray. Daily periods of Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament are encouraged, even unto the whole time the church is open. Guidelines for this are contained in the Ritual *“Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass”*.

Priests are encouraged to be often present in the churches, at prayer themselves and also available to provide opportunities for the individual celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance/Confession) as well as counselling, spiritual direction or compassionate listening.

Appropriate cleaning should be observed to provide a sanitary environment. All hymnals, prayer cards, and other resource items should be removed during this time from the pews and other distribution points in the church. Especially in this uncertain and extraordinary time, we want to offer access to our churches to assure that the Church remains close to you and ready to accompany you through this or any difficulty.

B) Other sacraments and Liturgical Assemblies

1) **Penitential Services**

All assemblies for parish penitential celebrations are cancelled. Priests will remain available to hear confessions but need to fulfill the requirements to assure confidentiality and to allow the medically requisite distancing between priest and penitent. Of course, our priests stand ready to visit persons in hospital or confined to home who request Holy Communion, Confession or the Sacrament of the Sick. In every case they are expected to practice appropriate risk mitigation.

2) **Baptism, First Eucharist, First Reconciliation and Confirmation**

All celebrations entailing liturgical assemblies/gatherings for these are postponed until the Chief Medical Officer has advised it safe to resume larger



gatherings. At that point, I will try to reschedule dates for confirmation, and I will grant to our pastors any necessary delegation enabling them to celebrate confirmation at times they themselves determine in consultation with parents and guardians.

3) **Sacramental Preparation**

Classes for children are cancelled. Catechists will provide to parents the resources necessary to help them complete at home the remaining instructions to be given to their children.

4) **Marriages**

Marriages ought to be postponed. However, if this is not possible, the priest will consult with the couple to determine the following: the limitation of attendees to not exceed the official guidelines for group gatherings as well as following any other medical directives.

5) **Funerals**

Funerals may continue to be celebrated in our churches. In consultation with the relatives of the deceased, the priest celebrant will determine if participation needs to be limited to immediate family members to follow prevailing medical directives. Public receptions following the funeral liturgy should not take place.

C) **Other Matters**

1) **Parish Missions**

All Lenten parish missions are cancelled. Parishes may consider livestreaming or recording the presentation of the speaker for posting on the parish website, but no public gathering is to be held.

2) **Parish Meetings and Gatherings**

To be decided upon by the pastor and parish council. Any gathering must be for necessary ongoing activities of the parish and equally only those that can fulfil the criteria and recommendations of the Chief Provincial Health Officer. At the present time, Manitoba's Public Health Officer, Dr. Brent Roussin, strongly recommends that all gatherings of 50 people or more be cancelled. We advise you to respect this recommendation. Thus, for smaller scale meetings and events, please act on your best judgment while exercising caution. Should you decide to meet, we ask you to take into account the proximity of people. If your room does not allow you to keep a distance of two meters between each participant, please cancel the meeting. Any gathering must also be with the guarantee that proper hygienic measures are in place. People who are suffering flu-like symptoms or people who should be in self-isolation, are not to attend.

3) **Diocesan Events and Celebrations due to the Coronavirus COVID-19**

All diocesan events and gatherings have been cancelled according to the same criteria listed in no. 2.



4) Considerations – Ongoing Financial Support to Parishes

Guidelines and suggestions will be circulated in a separate instruction shortly. Please refer to our diocesan Website.

Conclusion

We encourage our parish communities to be mindful of the need to support fellow parishioners and other community members, especially elders, the sick, and those who might be otherwise home-bound. This will require local coordination to assure compliance with the Chief Medical Officer directives.

All other liturgical directives that I have communicated to the diocese in earlier updates remain in place. Please join with me in prayer for a rapid end to the COVID-19 virus. May God grant healing to those who are ill, and eternal rest to those who have died. May the Lord's blessing come upon our medical professionals and civic authorities, who continue to strive with enormous effort and expertise to keep all of us safe.

Let us especially now become even more a people of prayer. It is our 'connectivity', our communion with God and with one another that will be our salvation.

Finally, in these unusual and distressing times, let us remember the words of Christ: *"Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid!"* (Mark 6:50)

Yours sincerely in Christ,

+ Albert LeGatt

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Archbishop of Saint Boniface