

Update for the Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas

November 3, 2020

Liturgical Protocols:

We are definitely experiencing a second wave of Covid-19 infections. We need to continue to be careful and follow the local health authority guidelines in our areas. We also have to be ready to act quickly if and when the Covid-19 virus is identified in our communities. We continue to do our best to be cautious.

If you are feeling sick or have the flu, please pray from home.

1. Sunday Mass: *We are at 20% occupancy in Manitoba; maximum of 15 in Saskatchewan. It is important that we keep a record of who has attended and when for possible contact tracing. Participation is limited to social/physical distancing protocols, inclusive of the priest-presider. (physical distancing limitations will follow later in this document).*

Masks must be worn in all public places. In this case, people attending religious services are to adhere to this order. The wearing of masks is not required of: children under 5 years of age, a person with a medical condition this is unrelated to COVID-19, including breathing or cognitive difficulties; a person with a disability that prevents them from safely wearing a mask; a person who is unable to put on or remove a mask without the assistance of another person.

2. Church Accessibility: *Parishes are encouraged to keep their churches open, as much as they can, for people to pray privately. Priests should be available to hear confessions or to provide opportunities to discuss pastoral concerns. In addition, it would be appropriate for the Blessed Sacrament to be exposed and for Benediction to be celebrated.*

3. Live-streaming or YouTube Sunday Masses: *We continue to video Mass from Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Cathedral every Sunday. Parishes which are currently live-streaming Masses are encouraged to continue to do so if they feel this is of benefit particularly for Sunday Mass.*

4. Catechism: *It is important that we try to have some catechism classes again. We will try to learn from the schools what is the best way to try to hold the classes safely. As always, at least two adults need to be present. The wearing of masks is necessary where two meter distancing is not possible. Instructional settings for children (e.g., Sunday school) should follow the applicable provincial government guidelines for day camps following social distancing and gathering size requirements. If possible, minimize the time spent together in-person and increase ventilation by opening windows or meeting outside.*

- *Attendance must be taken for each class with a name and contact number.*

- *Two catechism teachers must be present for each class. Both teachers need to have a RCMP criminal records check with vulnerable sector.*
- *Screening must occur each day at drop off for each student.*
- *Children with symptoms should not be allowed to attend.*
- *Child care center sanitation and infection prevention guidelines must be followed.*
- *Masks are recommended for catechism teachers and students grade 4 or older.*
- *Promote individual activity to minimize contact.*
- *Contact sports or games or the use of shared equipment is strongly discouraged. Remove toys, crafts and books that are not easily sanitized.*
- *Encourage extra handwashing for staff and catechists.*
- *Choirs or musical theatre activities will not be allowed, due to a higher risk of transmission through singing as compared to speaking.*

Communion outside of Mass: *Communion could be given to those unable to attend Mass. This should be with the Word of God and prayer. The person giving communion needs to be a blessed Communion Minister and should be wearing a mask and disinfect or wash his or her hands before distributing.*

Baptisms: *The celebration of Baptism should be held outside of the Eucharistic celebration so as to ensure minimal gatherings and social distancing. Due to the close proximity with the child, a face covering (mask) should be worn by the celebrant. Baptism by immersion is not allowed at this time. Hand sanitizing stations for the assembly must be provided.*

Reconciliation: *For the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation two practices need to be considered: a) confessionals: the use of confessionals must ensure that physical distancing is maintained between the kneeling penitent and the confessor. The wearing of a face covering (mask) by the confessor is mandatory.; b) face to face confessions: the practice of face to face confessions must ensure physical/social distancing is maintained. The wearing of a face covering (mask) by the confessor is mandatory. Any surfaces, including door handles and chair arms, that may have been touched, must be sanitized.*

Anointing of the Sick: *Communal celebrations of the Anointing of the Sick are not to be held during this time. Individual anointing must ensure physical/social distancing. The presider must wear a face covering (mask) and use a cotton or Q-Tip type swab to apply the sacred oil. Priests who are asked to anoint in hospital settings must abide by the hospital guidelines.*

Marriages: *In the event that a wedding is to be celebrated, the established hand sanitizing and social/physical distancing requirements for the assembly must be observed. At the time of the Nuptial Ritual the presider must ensure physical/social distancing from the couple.*

Funerals: This and wakes are some of our most challenging times to gather. If a funeral is to be celebrated, the established hand sanitizing and physical/social distancing requirements for the assembly must be observed. The number of people attending must be according to the Health Authority. In Northern Manitoba, that number is currently 5. Please note that the celebrant, as well as other persons assigned by the parish, such as a cantor or lector, are NOT to be counted among the five persons attending. In the case of funerals, staff from a funeral home are NOT to be counted.

Sanitizing Worship Spaces: The worship space and all public spaces must be thoroughly cleaned after use. A sanitizing disinfectant must be applied throughout all spaces and all surfaces wiped down after each use.

Liturgies outdoors: Greater numbers of people can be accommodated outdoors. If a Liturgy is to be celebrated outdoors, physical/social distancing must be observed relative to outside seating.

Related Liturgical Protocols

Though the presider and deacon should not use face coverings (masks) during the celebration of the Liturgy, face coverings (masks) are now mandatory at the time of the distribution of Communion. Altar servers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion as well as readers must wear face coverings (masks); readers should remove them for the proclamation of the Word. Gloves should not be worn by any liturgical minister during the celebration of the Liturgy. Those standing or seated in the sanctuary must ensure that physical/social distancing is observed. This same observance applies to music leaders.

1. Managing approved capacity: We are to limit attendance to 20% of capacity in Manitoba; maximum of 15 in Saskatchewan. We invite pastors/administrators to discuss how best to accomplish this with their Parish Pastoral Councils.

2. Hand sanitizing stations: Liquid hand sanitizing stations must be made available at the entrance to church buildings. It is advisable to have multiple stations to accommodate ministers and parishioners in an efficient manner so as to prevent crowding. All ministers and parishioners must be asked to sanitize their hands upon arrival at the church building. Physical/social distancing of two metres must be maintained.

3. Seating: Accommodation must be made to ensure physical/social distancing within the worship space. It is recommended that every second row be blocked off. Those seated must be asked to maintain physical/social distancing to the left and right between individuals or family units. Those living in the same household however, may sit together without distancing. Wearing a mask when seated is recommended. However, it is permitted to remove one's mask once seated, provided physical distancing is maintained.

4. Music and Singing: *People should not be singing near each other (unless from the same household) and should avoid using hymnals that another person has recently used.*

5. Collection Procedures: *Collection baskets must not be passed through the assembly person to person. Collection baskets with long handles may be used, in which case only the usher passes the collection basket. If long handled collection baskets are not available, then the collection should be placed into free standing baskets as the assembly gathers for worship. The collection should not be processed to the altar but stored immediately in a place of safekeeping.*

6. Offertory Procession: *The offertory procession is to be eliminated at this time. The gifts of bread and wine should be placed on a credence table in the sanctuary prior to the Liturgy.*

7. Bread and wine on the altar: *It is important that the bread and wine placed on the altar for consecration be covered, by a pall or other covering, so as to ensure no contamination. We generally are distributing communion from the ciborium in the tabernacle to help reduce the possibility of spread of virus.*

8. The Sign of Peace: *The sign of peace is expressed with a bow of the head toward your neighbour.*

9. Communion Procession: *New patterns will need to be developed. Physical/social distancing must be maintained during the Communion procession. It is recommended that the assembly approaches the Communion Minister one row at a time.*

10. Communion distribution: *Communion from the cup is to be discontinued during this time. Those distributing communion should sanitize their hands thoroughly in a discreet location immediately after they have received Communion and before accepting a ciborium for distribution. Communion is to be distributed only on the hand of each communicant with great care not to make physical contact. Face coverings (masks) must be worn by those distributing Communion. These face coverings (masks) must be affixed and secured before sanitizing hands.*

11. Exiting the Worship space: *A plan for exiting the worship space is to be established to ensure physical distancing. Ensuring that aisles and pathways flow in only one direction may help to prevent congestion.*

12. Foyer/narthex gatherings: *The assembly is to refrain from congregating in the foyer or narthex.*

13. Holy Water Fonts: *Holy Water Fonts are to be drained and kept clean.*

Conclusion

As we continue to live through the challenging times of COVID- 19 and with the restrictions on large gatherings which follow from the pandemic, it is important that we be united in prayer, Christian solidarity and the practice of patience.

May God continue to bless all of you, so that together we may come through this time of tribulation with renewed faith, unwavering hope and self-giving love.

Yours in Christ,

*Fr. Jim Fiori OMI
Vicar General/Chancellor
Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas*