

***“This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad.
Alleluia”***

Perhaps there is nothing as hopeful and meaningful in our faith celebrations as the Easter Vigil Mass when the new Paschal Candle is brought into the darkened church. The simple light is held high and shines brightly in the darkness as a reminder that Jesus is the light of the world. The people light their small candles from the Easter Candle, one by one. The church becomes radiant and there is a sign of hope coming from each of us holding our lighted candles. The Paschal Candle moves down the aisle accompanied by the words: Christ our Light -Thanks be to God, echoing through the church.

Is this not a sign of what we are called to do as we move forward through this pandemic? Are we not called to be signs of hope as we re-build our communities following the destruction caused by the corona virus in the past year? In fact, we are on the very doorstep of a unique experience of church renewal. As Archbishop Richard Gagnon of Winnipeg says, “The lessons we have learned over the past year must play a part in this renewal, especially how important, beautiful and valuable our faith really is; how vital the sacraments are to us; how hopeful the Word of God is to us. Is not our task to rebuild, to renew, to proclaim, to go out and be that light symbolized at the Easter Vigil?”

This Easter, perhaps more than ever, there is good reason to be hopeful in our faith and to live a true Christian realism where we clearly acknowledge the reality of our present situation with all its lights and shadows. Patience and caution continues to be asked of us as the roll out of the vaccines is taking some time. Yet our Easter Faith means simply to believe that God’s hand can be found everywhere and, in every event, however happy or sad, knowing, as St. Paul says: “...that all things work together for good for those who love God”

Wishing you and your loved ones, friends, family and communities a most blessed, healthy and graced Easter celebration.

Happy Easter!

Fr. Jim Fiori omi

Archbishop Murray Chatlain

A grace filled rest of Lent for you all,

I will try to make clear some of the present guidelines for us going into Holy Week for the Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas.

All of these are dependent on your local Health Authority. Each community has to deal with their present Covid situation.

Manitoba: *We are allowed to gather 25% of the capacity of our building up to 100 people (whichever is less).*

This does not apply to weddings and funerals. Only ten people so far can be at a wedding or funeral in Manitoba.

You can have gatherings for Parish Council, CWL and KofC up to 25% of the room that you are in.

You can also have catechism classes up to 25% of capacity of the room that you are in.

All of these require social distancing, sterilizing and masks.

Saskatchewan: *As of March 19 we can have 30% up to 150 people according to our capacity. This does include weddings and funerals. I would suggest great care at funerals trying to maintain social distancing and mask wearing and hand cleansing.*

I think this only applies to religious gatherings. Meetings are limited to ten.

For Palm Sunday: *Like last year Palms can be set out individually ahead of time. They can be blest and then carefully picked up without breaking social distancing. Some Churches are not using palms this year at all. If you have no priest, you could simply quietly sprinkle holy water on the palms and then let people pick them up.*

For Holy Thursday: *No washing of the feet.*

For Good Friday: *For the veneration of the Cross: no kissing or touching. People can come up like communion and bow or genuflect or in some way show respect.*

For Easter Vigil: *Candles can be laid out ahead of time. Lighting can be done carefully while keeping social distancing. Sprinkling of the people with Holy Water just from the front is recommended. It may be good to have individual bottles of Holy Water again this year to avoid possible transmission of Covid.*

We will continue to provide online services from the Cathedral and other places to help those who cannot physically attend.

Yet again, it will be a different Holy Week. But we can make the best of what we can do. Our prayer is that the vaccinations are coming and that slowly we will be able to gather again.

Please feel free to contact Fr. Jim or myself with your questions.

Bishop Murray