



Archdiocese of Winnipeg

Office of the Archbishop

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MEMORANDUM

To: All Parishes
All Clergy
All Institutes of Consecrated Life

From: Archbishop Gagnon *+ R G.*

Date: March 18, 2020

Re: Update #2 – Coronavirus (COVID- 19)

The following Protocols are to be fully implemented as of today, March 18, 2020. Every one of us has been affected by the COVID- 19 Virus, socially, psychologically, physically, financially and spiritually. Most notably we are becoming more and more aware of our responsibility toward our neighbour in preventing the spread of this virus. In particular, I'm thinking of the elderly and the vulnerable since they are in the greatest danger of contagion. In my previous memo I emphasized the importance of personal hygiene and social distancing as practical steps in fulfilling our mutual responsibility toward one another.

Protocol:

As of today, after a number of important consultations, including, with the Council of Priests and the Manitoba Bishops and following the directives of Manitoba Health, the following important protocols are to be put into effect immediately in the Archdiocese of Winnipeg:

1. **Sunday Mass:** All churches, chapels and mission places of worship are to suspend public Masses until and including Sunday, April 26, 2020. (This date could change according to circumstances). Please make use of our Archdiocesan Website (www.archwinnipeg.ca) and social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and your own parish Website to keep up to date. In addition, please inform your family and neighbours of this important memo and any further changes.

In the interest of preventing the further spread of COVID- 19 and to safeguard the health and well-being of the faithful, I, Most Reverend Richard Gagnon, Archbishop of Winnipeg, dispense all Catholics in the Archdiocese of Winnipeg from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass from March 22 – April 26, 2020.

2. **Weekday Mass:** All weekday public Masses will cease during this period. Priests are asked to celebrate Mass privately each day, keeping in mind the intentions of our communities, province and country at this time.
3. **Parish Offices:** It is important that where possible, our parish offices, even though operating on reduced hours, seek to remain an active presence within our communities so as to respond to the needs of the faithful.
4. **Church Accessibility:** Where possible, Churches are encouraged to remain open, for certain hours during each day, to allow people to pray privately. (Appropriate cleaning should be observed to provide a sanitary environment in our Churches). On this note, however, seniors or those who have serious medical conditions are encouraged to remain at home as a form of social distancing.
5. **Live-streamed Masses and Holy Week:** The Archbishop will celebrate a private Mass each Sunday from the Cathedral at 11:00 am, "live-streamed" at our Archdiocesan Website www.archwinnipeg.ca. This will begin Sunday, March 22nd and will continue throughout the duration of these protocols. Where possible, parishes are encouraged to "live-stream" private Sunday Masses themselves. Holy Week celebrations will be "live-streamed" from the Cathedral (more information will follow).

The following scheduled events are cancelled:

1. The Confirmation Rally at St. Dominic's Parish (Neepawa) on March 21.
2. The Confirmation Rally at Immaculate Conception Parish (Winnipeg) on March 28.
3. The Mass of Chrism (including the Banquet) on April 6. (The Archbishop will privately bless the Holy Oils and they will be distributed to the Parishes).
4. The Public Way of the Cross on April 10. (Obviously Parish communal celebrations of the Way of the Cross are also to be cancelled).
5. In addition, all parish public meetings, workshops and gatherings should cease during this time.

Other Celebrations:

1. **Confirmations and First Communions:** Depending on the spread of COVID- 19 these celebrations, in May and June, may be postponed.
2. **Baptisms:** All communal celebrations of this sacrament (where a number of Baptisms occur together) will cease. For individual Baptisms, only a small number of people should be present.
3. **Funerals:** Pastors will consult with families about our current situation and speak to them about the importance of limiting the attendees to a small number, primarily to immediate family.

What can we do as the people of God under these necessary restrictions?:

At this challenging time we must be people of prayer in a special way. We need to pray for our communities, province, country and the world that this virus will be eradicated. We need to pray for those in the medical field. Let us also pray for the elderly and the vulnerable that they will be protected. We are reminded that while it is important to follow carefully the provisions of the health authorities, it is also essential that our spiritual life be enhanced and strengthened all the more during this crisis.

Our Synod reminded us that the family is the domestic church. We have spoken much over the past year about the importance of Sacred Scripture and *Lectio Divina* within the family. While Holy Mass is unavailable, this time can remind us of the importance of Scripture in our lives. This can be a time to adopt the practice of a daily reading of Scripture, especially the Sunday Readings. It is also a time to practice Spiritual Communion. Information on *Lectio Divina* and Spiritual Communion will be available on our Archdiocesan Website: www.archwinnipeg.ca.

Daily Mass is available on Vision TV, as well as by a small subscription, on the Canadian Catholic Network SALT AND LIGHT and on EWTN from the United States, on Shaw or Bell MTS.

On our Archdiocesan Website: www.archwinnipeg.ca our Offices of Catechetics and Youth and Young Adults will provide weekly programming to assist youth, parents and young adults. (This is in keeping with one of our Synod recommendations which encouraged the use of media for Evangelization).

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 bless our medical personnel and civic authorities, who continue to strive with enormous effort and expertise to keep all of us safe.