



MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 24, 2020

TO: All diocesan and religious priests

COPY: Permanent deacons, Parish Life Directors, Seminarians, Parish Secretaries, Superiors of Religious Congregations, Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Parish Pastoral Councils, Employees of the Archdiocesan Centre

FROM: Most Reverend Albert LeGatt
Archbishop of Saint Boniface

SUBJECT: **COVID-19 Pandemic - Weekly Update No. 5**

Dear friends,

We are pleased to share Weekly Update No. 5 with you. It reviews certain essential elements and informs you of new information and clarifies questions that have been brought forward, especially by the Deans during our weekly Tuesday morning teleconference, and now by the priests, Parish Life Directors, and lay leaders from each of our parishes during our teleconferences with them.

I. New Items

Ongoing Temporary Cancellation of Assemblies for Sunday and Weekday Masses

Following the announcement from Dr. Brent Roussin, Chief Public Health Officer, indicating that the Province has extended the implementation of emergency measures which require the current level of (physical) social distancing to May 16, and as a follow-up to the teleconference of the Manitoba Catholic Bishops held on April 17, as well as the Deans' teleconference on April 21, the following decision has been made.

The cancellation of assemblies for Sunday Mass until the end of April, as decreed on March 19 in Liturgical Protocol III, is now being extended until Monday, May 18, 2020.

This is in keeping with the information we receive daily from the Chief Public Health Officer. We will continue to proceed this way in the future. This means that we will once again discern whether or not to prolong the cancellation of liturgical assemblies, and for how long, two weeks before May 18. The time will come when we will once again be able to have assemblies; however, we know that this will be done in stages, e.g. from 10 (the current number) to 50, then from 50 to 100, then to 250, etc.

This requires reflection and planning because our parishes are quite varied in terms of the total number of parishioners in the parish and at each mass, the size of the space, the needs for French and English masses, and the proximity of other parishes. A committee was formed to help each of the parishes in their preparations for reopening masses to the public (as opposed to the priests' private masses), which will require each parish to make its own decisions regarding the composition of the assembly, according to the maximum in effect at that time. This committee, comprised of Br. Greg Mulligan (St. Alphonsus), Fr. Vincent Lusty (Swan Lake Pastoral Region) and myself, will draft recommendations and directives regarding the process of reopening liturgical assemblies to the public, which will extend over a period of many weeks, and probably many months, until the time when even the largest parishes will return to normal functioning with all of us not having to practice physical distancing anymore. On that day, we will sing many Alleluias and the church bells will ring for a long time!

Distribution of Communion Outside of Mass

Many questions continue to be asked concerning this topic, such as how to interpret the diocesan directives, and that in different contexts and at different moments of the evolution and then devolution of this pandemic. We addressed this question during our weekly Deans' meeting on Tuesday, April 21.

Fr. Carl Tarnopolski, V. G., prepared a document on the theological and liturgical principles to follow regarding this question, according to the Roman Ritual entitled "Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass" (1973). A committee consisting of Fr. Carl Tarnopolski, Fr. Joshua Gundrum and Fr. Marcel Carrière will draft recommendations and directives regarding the distribution of communion outside of the private masses being celebrated by the priests. This document will also address the effect of the different phases foreseen for the lifting of imposed measures, that is to say the changing of the maximum number of people allowed to gather in a space, from 10 to 25 to 50, and so on.

Priests' Private Masses - Now with the Possibility of Having a Small Group of No More Than 10 People Present, Including the Priest

Up until now, we have asked that there be no more than four lay people present for your private masses (Sundays and weekdays). This information was provided in Weekly Update No. 2, which was sent out on April 3. The idea was to maintain a maximum of five people, which is half of what was (and still is) permitted by the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer. However, the signs we are receiving from Dr. Roussin seem to indicate that restrictions may be lifted, little by little, sooner rather than later.

In this spirit, I decree that it is possible, in the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface, to have ten (10) people present for the priests' private masses. This maximum of 10 people includes the priest. This decree is effective immediately.

The following directives from Weekly Update No. 2, though with some modifications, sent April 3, 2020, remain in effect:

- There can be no call to assemble, no invitations (personal or in general), nor scheduling of a rotation of your parishioners, nor calling your parishioners to ask them to exercise certain ministries (except in situations of the parishes' own livestreaming efforts).
- In short, there is to be no invitation, promotion, coercion or even influence exercised to have people come to church for the priest's private mass. The churches should be locked at the time of the celebration of this private mass. Therefore, only those parishioners who of their own complete initiative have contacted the pastor beforehand asking to come to participate in the mass may be present. This allows the pastor to make sure the maximum number of people is never surpassed, and the possibility of contagion is minimized as much as possible, especially now as we are trying to keep the spread of this pandemic under control as much as possible.
- Parishes can publish dates and times of masses in the bulletins and through other communication means. However, for the moment I ask that the priests not celebrate more than one private mass per day, including Sundays. An exception could be made for a bilingual parish, allowing one mass in each language.

In deciding to adopt these measures, we are following the advice of Manitoba's Chief Health Officer, Dr. Brent Roussin, who has advised that the next weeks will continue to be critical and that we must remain vigilant and disciplined for the common good. This continues to require the highest degree of physical isolation, which requires that everyone stay home.

Confirmations

In light of the fact that we will not be able to gather large assemblies in the near future, including for Confirmation celebrations, I have decided to completely cancel my Confirmation celebrations until the end of June. I will confirm once again next spring.

Nevertheless, I am prepared to give the priests permission to celebrate this sacrament for the candidates in their parish this year. This decision should be made following discussion between the priests and catechists with the parents of the children to ascertain whether that is still their wish. The sacrament of Confirmation could then be celebrated for the entire group of candidates or for a portion of the group. However, I would ask that the priest send me a letter requesting my permission.

II. Reminders

Meeting of the Diocesan Council of Priests

The meeting scheduled for April 21, 2020 has been postponed until May 5, 2020, from 1:00 PM until 3:30 PM (via teleconference).

Annual Retreat for the Diocesan Priests

The priests' retreat which was scheduled for April 27 to May 1, 2020, at Wilderness Edge Retreat Centre in Pinawa has been cancelled for this year. However, priests are invited to make a five-day retreat at another time during the year. This will be discussed in further detail at the next teleconference with the deans.

Ordinations

To the Diaconate

Christian Illunga Mutombo: Friday, June 5, 2020, at 9:30 AM

To the Priesthood

Deacon Jean-Baptiste (Anh Duy) Nguyen: Saturday, June 6, 2020, at 7 PM.

Deacon Brian Trueman: Saturday, June 13, 2020, at 10 AM

These ordination masses will be livestreamed. The number of people allowed to gather for these celebrations will depend on the measures from Manitoba's Chief Public Health Officer in effect at that time.

Clarifications From the Chief Public Health Officer

On March 31, 2020, our Communications Coordinator, Mr. Daniel Bahuaud, wrote to the Government of Manitoba (Public Health Office) asking the following three questions. We have included the answers received by the Government of Manitoba.

1. Are churches still able to have up to ten people at assemblies?

Yes, places of worship including churches can continue operating as long as there are less than 10 people in attendance. In addition, it is required to implement measures to ensure that people attending the place of worship are reasonably able to maintain a separation of at least two metres from each other. (Answered April 1)

2. Can the diocesan and parish offices remain open?

Faith organizations may operate remotely like an excluded business. This means they can have staff inside for filming/broadcast/office work. However, they must follow social distancing guidelines and are limited to gatherings of 10 people or less. (Answered April 4)

3. Are churches and other faith organizations considered essential services? Faith organizations are listed specifically in the public gathering order; they are not included on the essential services schedule. (Answered April 4)

Sunday Masses (Every Week)

Presider: Archbishop Albert LeGatt

In French at 9 AM

In English at 10:30 AM

The liturgies can be accessed via the Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens parish YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFLbnkM6HIRYpb4QjiXeBOg/live>

And on the diocesan Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/ArchSaintBoniface/live>

PLEASE NOTE: the liturgies will begin promptly at the time indicated for the livestream. If you access the Facebook or YouTube page before that time, you may end up joining in the end of the previous liturgy.

Ringling of Church Bells

I would also invite you to ring your church bells at noon on Easter Sunday and on every Sunday until Pentecost, i.e. until the end of the Easter Season. Please ring them for at least five minutes.

In this context, the joyous ringing of bells is to signal our gratitude to all frontline workers throughout our society, all those thousands of people who leave their homes and their security of their good health, to engage in the whole sphere of essential services by which the rest of us continue to live, as normally as possible, be in security and know we will be cared for as we need it.

However, for this to have its maximum effect, we need to inform our parishioners as to why the bells are being rung. If your parish decides to embark on this project, please inform your parishioners of this in the coming days.

We are also trying to invite other Christian Churches and even other faith communities to join similar efforts, each according to their tradition and practice.

The Archdiocesan Centre Remains Open

Despite having closed the Diocesan Centre to the public, all diocesan services, including the Office of the Archbishop, Administration, and Pastoral Services, continue to be offered remotely with as few service interruptions possible.

+ Albert LeGatt

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Archbishop of Saint Boniface