



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** May 1, 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. 6**

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Dear friends,

We are pleased to share with you Weekly Update No. 6. It reviews certain essential elements and informs you of new information and clarifies questions that have been brought forward.

### **I. New Items**

#### **Ongoing Temporary Cancellation of Assemblies for Sunday and Weekday Masses**

The cancellation of assemblies for Sunday Masses, as decreed on April 24, 2020, in Weekly Update No. 5, remains in effect until Monday, May 18, 2020.

This means that we will once again discern whether or not to prolong the cancellation of liturgical assemblies, and for how long, during the Manitoba Bishops' teleconference scheduled for Wednesday, May 13, 2020. We will be taking into consideration the information the Government of Manitoba shared on Wednesday, April 29, 2020, in its document entitled "*Restoring Safe Services—Manitoba's Pandemic and Economic Roadmap for Recovery*."



In particular, we will consider the information regarding public assemblies cited on pages 31 and 32, recognizing that we fall into the categories of “public gatherings” and “large gatherings/events.”

### **RESTORING SERVICES (PHASE TWO)**

#### **No earlier than June 1**

*(other than the potential reconsideration of the size of public gatherings in mid-May)*

*If the results of phase one of restoring services are positive, the following activities and business may restart or reopen in a limited manner. Other changes may be considered as the results of phase one are reviewed.*

***If results during or at the end of phase one are not positive, the province will not proceed with further easing of public health measures and may reintroduce others.***

### **PUBLIC GATHERINGS**

*In addition to any increases that may take effect in mid-May, public gatherings such as social gatherings, worship, weddings and funerals may be permitted to increase, following a review of the health risk and as long as physical distancing can be maintained.*

### **RESTORING SERVICES (FUTURE PHASES)**

*Subsequent to phase two, additional phases will be considered. New phases will be implemented on a three-to-four-week basis, ensuring adequate time between phases is provided to monitor cases and ensure easing and further restrictions are able to respond to the evidence of viral transmission.*

*While the government continues to evaluate areas for easing in future phases, there are particular considerations for each of the following areas:*

### **LARGE GATHERINGS/EVENTS AND PERFORMING ARTS VENUES**

***There will be no large gatherings or events until at least September 2020.*** As the situation evolves, Manitoba public health officials will make decisions based on evidence at the time.

Therefore, we continue to follow and to dissect the information and directives received from the government, while examining the possibilities for being able to once again open liturgies to the public. As is the case with the government's measures, our own measures will slowly move forward one step at a time.

This requires reflection and planning because our parishes are quite varied in terms of the total number of parishioners at each Mass, the size of the space, the needs for French and English Masses, the proximity of other parishes, etc., etc. A committee has been



formed to help each parish in their preparations for reopening Masses to the public (as opposed to the priests' private Masses), which will require decisions to be made on a regional level to determine the composition of assemblies, depending on the maximum in effect at that time. This committee is comprised of Br. Greg Mulligan (St. Alphonsus), Fr. Vincent Lusty (Swan Lake Pastoral Region) and myself.

### **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 continue to examine this question during the Tuesday teleconferences with the Deans, who represent the eight regions of our diocese.

A committee consisting of Fr. Carl Tarnopolski, Fr. Joshua Gundrum and Fr. Marcel Carrière is drafting a document (a type of *vade-mecum*) with recommendations and directives regarding the distribution of communion outside of the private Masses being celebrated by the priests.

## **II. Reminders**

### **Priests' Private Masses (Sundays & Weekdays)—Now with the Possibility of Having a Small Group of No More Than 10 People Present, Including the Priest**

In Weekly Update No. 5, issued April 24, 2020, I decreed 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 remains in effect with the following conditions:

- 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. During the next teleconference of the Diocesan Council of Priests on May 5, 2020, we will discern whether the time has come to ask priests to consider the possibility of celebrating more than one private Sunday Mass at the regularly scheduled times for weekend Masses in the different parishes under their pastoral care.**

In deciding to adopt these measures, we are following the advice of Manitoba's Chief Health Officer, Dr. Brent Roussin, who has advised that we must remain vigilant and disciplined for the common good. This continues to require the highest degree of physical isolation.

### **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 resume celebrating confirmations next Spring.

Nevertheless, I am prepared to give the priests permission to celebrate this sacrament for the candidates in their parish. This decision would be made upon discussion between the priests and catechists with the parents of the children who have been planning to be confirmed 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 ask that the priests send me a letter requesting my permission.

### **Sunday Masses (Every Week)**

Presider: Archbishop Albert LeGatt

**In French** at 9:00 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 continue ringing 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. As such, we will continue to demonstrate our gratitude toward the front-line workers in our communities.

### **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.

### **III. Food for Thought: A Message from Most Reverend Donald Bolen, Archbishop of Regina**

We wish to share with you a beautiful and profound reflection by Archbishop Bolen on their diocese's practical and spiritual approach regarding the Government of Saskatchewan's new plan concerning the current COVID-19 pandemic. The link to his written reflection is found in the body of the email you received from my office.

Please click on the following link to access Archbishop Bolen's message on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/C4kBYrC2V1g>.

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