



Clarifications Regarding COVID-19 Measures

October 28, 2021

Options available regarding the number of people who may gather for the celebration of baptisms, weddings, funerals and for parish meetings and gatherings.

Foreword

As we move deeper into the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, our Church is called to greater and greater charity. As the people of God, following Jesus, we are called to seek the good of all, overcoming division and isolation.

We continue to ask the faithful to think of the vulnerable persons around us, to get vaccinated, and to respect diocesan protocols and the Public Health Orders conceived for the good of all Manitobans.

*Since our parish liturgical celebrations are occasions where we can gather together for prayer and discernment in shared mercy, in a very real sense, our churches are spiritual hospitals. That is why our weekday Masses and Sunday Mass, in particular, are meant for the **entire** people of God, and will continue to be open to all the faithful. Proof of vaccination will **not** be asked for any **parish liturgical celebration**.*

1. Regular Parish Religious Services

According to Order 22 of the current Public Health Orders, there are two possible options for churches celebrating religious services: a congregation with a mix of vaccinated and unvaccinated persons, or a congregation where the faithful show proof of vaccination:

Order 22(1) *Regular religious services may be held in churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other places of worship if*
(a) the number of persons attending does not exceed 25 persons or 33% of the usual capacity of the premises, whichever is greater; and

(b) measures are implemented to ensure that persons attending the service are reasonably able to maintain a separation of at least two metres from other persons at the service, other than persons who reside at the same private residence.

OR

Order 22(3) *The restrictions set out do not apply if attendance at a service is restricted to the following:*

(a) persons who produce proof of vaccination;

(b) persons who produce proof from the Government of Manitoba that there is a medical reason for the person not to receive a vaccine for COVID-19;

(c) persons under 12 years of age

PLEASE NOTE: Only the first option may be chosen in our archdiocese, as proof of vaccination will not be asked for any regular parish liturgical celebration.

2. Weddings, Funerals and Baptisms

As of October 26, the capacity for indoor weddings, funerals, prayer vigils for the deceased or baptisms is now at 150 people, or 50 per cent of capacity, whichever is **lower**:

Order 2(3) *A wedding or funeral and any associated reception may be held if the number of persons attending does not exceed 50% of the capacity of the premises where the event takes place or 150 persons, whichever is lower.*

No proof of vaccination is required.

3. Parish Meetings (Parish Pastoral Councils/Parish Finance Committee, etc.), Parish Group Meetings (Knights of Columbus, Catholic Women's League, Parish Assemblies etc.), Formation Events, Conferences and Other Group Meetings

We ask the clergy and the faithful who organize parish meetings, conferences, assemblies and other group meetings to consider using tools such as Zoom and Teams that make remote participation by many people to these gatherings possible.

If in-person meetings are to be held, the maximum number of people is 25:

Order 2(1) *Except as otherwise permitted by these Orders, all persons are prohibited from assembling in a gathering involving more than (a) 25 persons or 25% of the usual capacity of the premises, whichever is lower, in the case of a gathering at indoor premises that are not a private residence.*

However, there are circumstances where parish or diocesan events, conferences and group meetings may necessitate or warrant a greater number of in-person participants. Using prudential judgement, such events could be organized with more than 25 in-person participants in mind:

Order 2(2) *The restrictions set out in subsection (1) do not apply if attendance at a gathering is restricted to the following: (a) persons who produce proof of vaccination; (b) persons who produce proof from the Government of Manitoba that there is a medical reason for the person not to receive a vaccine for COVID-19.*

We remind parishes that such meetings can include conferences on a given topic, Adult Faith Formation, RCIA, Parish council or administrative meetings, K of C, CWL, youth groups, sacramental preparation meetings, etc.

If this option is chosen, parishes are responsible for inviting participants in advance and communicating the vaccination requirement to them. Should such a course of action be decided upon, we ask that organizers be mindful of the non-vaccinated, who could participate remotely via Zoom, Teams or other online conferencing tools. They must also prepare for the online participation of those who will not be attending in person.

On the day of the meeting, parishes must ensure that **all** the people attending in person are vaccinated. The verifying of vaccination status must be made at the door.

4. Reminders regarding Religious Services

A. Masks

Parishes are reminded that masks **must** be worn at all religious services and indoor events. Parishes are legally and morally responsible for ensuring that anyone who attends a Mass, religious service or event wears a mask.

Anyone who refuses to wear a mask is to be politely invited to ***leave the premises*** and participate via livestream, or via television. Such a person may call their priest to set up an appointment, either within the church or at the parish office, to receive the Eucharist other than at Mass.

B. Holy Communion

We remind parish liturgical teams to be mindful of the following public health procedures during Holy Communion:

- **Pastor/Priest celebrant MUST** wear a mask during the distribution of Holy Communion.
- Priest celebrant is to: Consecrate → Completely consume personal host and consume completely from the Chalice → sanitize hands → Mask → Sanitize hands → Distribute from ciborium to the faithful (or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion 'EMHC' if necessary).
- Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are to: Receive Holy Communion → sanitize hands → Mask → Sanitize hands → Receive ciborium from the Priest → Distribute to the faithful.

Thank you,

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