



Archdiocese of Winnipeg

Office of the Archbishop

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MEMORANDUM

To: All Parishes
All Clergy

From: Archbishop Richard Gagnon

Date: February 10, 2021

Re: Re-opening of Churches
The Celebration of Ash Wednesday

Introduction

As announced yesterday by the Provincial Government, new public health orders will take effect throughout Manitoba at 12:01 a.m. on Friday, February 12, 2021. They include provision for faith-based gatherings of up to 10% of a church's capacity or fifty (50) people, whichever is lower. The restriction does not include the presider, one (1) cantor, one (1) accompanist, and live-stream volunteers or staff.

In addition, the celebrations of weddings, funerals, and baptisms remain restricted to ten (10) people. This does not include the presider, one (1) cantor, one (1) accompanist, live-stream volunteers or staff, and in the case of funerals, the funeral home staff.

Procedures for the sanitization of spaces and physical distancing throughout the gatherings remain. The use of masks is required in all indoor and outdoor gatherings, with exceptions for children under five years of age; and persons with a medical condition unrelated to COVID-19 preventing them from safely wearing or removing a mask (e.g. a person with asthma, allergies, or a physical disability). Those who wish to remove their face mask during a liturgy may do so provided they are seated and separated from other persons by at least two (2) metres (physical distancing). Mask use is required whenever unseated or while moving within the public space.

These COVID-19 procedures, along with others applicable during this time of the pandemic, are found on our Archdiocesan website under the "COVID-19" tab. There is a helpful "Summary" document that you may also refer to on the webpage.

Distribution of Ashes During COVID-19

On January 12, 2021, the Holy See issued a note laying out the procedures to be followed for the distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday 2021. The instruction is as follows:

“After blessing the ashes and sprinkling them with holy water in silence, the priest addresses those present, reciting once the formula found in the Roman Missal: ‘Repent and believe in the Gospel’ or ‘Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.’ Then the priest cleanses his hands, puts on a face mask and distributes ashes to those who come to him or, if appropriate, he goes to those who are standing in their places. He then sprinkles the ashes on each person’s head without saying anything.”

Another memorandum will follow should further changes be communicated by the Provincial Government. Thank you for your kind cooperation.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard Gagnon", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

✙Richard Gagnon
Archbishop of Winnipeg