



Archdiocese of Winnipeg

*Office of the Archbishop*

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**An Instruction from the Roman and Ukrainian Catholic Archbishops of southern Manitoba on the matter of determining the number of people attending Masses on December 24, 25 and 26, 2021, in all the parishes of their respective dioceses**

December 20, 2021

Dear Friends,

On December 17, 2021, the Government of Manitoba announced tightened health restrictions which are to apply throughout the province. Effective Tuesday, December 21 at 12:00 am, faith-based gatherings, including the celebration of Mass, are permitted according to two options:

- i. A limit of 50 percent capacity with proof of vaccination
- ii. A total of 25 people (or 25% capacity, whichever is lower, without proof of vaccination)

These new measures are being implemented to stem the effect of increasing contagion rates and the subsequent increasing burdens on our health care system and especially its staff. However, they also impact all our parishes for the Christmas season.

In response to this situation, and attentive to the various pastoral needs of the faithful and their families during the Christmas festivities, Archbishop Richard Gagnon of Winnipeg, Archbishop Albert LeGatt of Saint-Boniface and Archbishop Lawrence Huculak of the Ukrainian Archeparchy of Winnipeg, direct the following:

**I. Instructions**

- 1) A parish may choose to designate one or more Masses on each of the days of December 24, 25, 26, for fully vaccinated persons only, including those under five who are not eligible for the vaccine. In this case, the number attending must not exceed 50 percent of the normal capacity of the church space. Physical distancing and mask wearing must be maintained.
- 2) If a parish chooses the above option, they must necessarily also provide a Mass on the same day which is open to everyone, with the understanding that these celebrations are to be restricted to 25 people.
- 3) At those Masses for fully vaccinated people, there will be need for verification at the door of the church of a Manitoba vaccination card or other such proof of vaccination.

4) We strongly encourage every parish to live-stream one or more Masses. This should be in place not just for Christmas celebrations but for every Sunday on an ongoing basis. There are always some of our parishioners who cannot or choose not to be present at the Sunday gathering. Live-streaming is another way of enhancing inclusion and communion.

5) These instructions, allowing some Masses for the fully vaccinated only, are valid for December 24, 25, and 26.

6) We encourage parishes to use all the means of communication at their disposal to reach out to their parishioners to inform them of these instructions, and to inform them of the reasons for these parish decisions at this particular time.

We encourage the distribution of this directive on parish websites.

## **II. Gospel values and Christian principles at work in discerning and implementing these instructions in your parishes:**

- We are the Body of Christ. We are in this all together.
- Our primary goal must be the love of neighbour and the common good for all in society, now especially in terms of security of health and life for all, with a particular attention to those vulnerable or fragile in their health.
- As from the beginning of the pandemic, the Catholic Church in Manitoba continues to sincerely cooperate with Manitoba Public Health and other civic authorities.
- We are a Church defined by communion and inclusion, combatting forms of division and exclusion, all through the grace of Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace.
- Any and all practical decisions at the ground level, i.e., the parish level, must be governed by the spirit of synodality: listening to one another, dialogue in kindness and charity, decisions seeking the greatest consensus, ongoing information sharing and explaining the reason for decisions, patience and a willingness to compromise, personal self-sacrifice, a commitment to the whole Body of Christ and all its members.
- Seek the fruits of the Holy Spirit and act in such a way as to assure their presence in the heart and lives of all others.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.”  
– Galatians, 5:22-26

In closing, we impart to you our common blessing as together we celebrate the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, and Prince of Peace. May His joy and love flow upon you and yours this Christmas season.

✚Richard Gagnon  
Archbishop of Winnipeg

✚Albert LeGatt  
Archbishop of St. Boniface

✚Lawrence Huculak  
Archeparch of Winnipeg