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DIRECTIVES FOR SACRAMENTS IN COVID-19

Dear Pastors, Parishes, Parish Life Directors, and Faithful of the Diocese of Saskatoon:

We have again received new clarifications with respect to the updated Public Health Order issued November 25, 2021. The existing health orders have been extended to January 31, 2022. The change that affects places of worship is found in the *COVID-19 Vaccination or Negative Proof of Test* public health order in 3(a)(ii). Previously, the public health order provided a simple exemption to places of worship. This section has now been revised as follows:

> *(ii) places of worship when the place is being actively used for activities of worship, worship or spiritual services, and ceremonies. Activities and events that are included in subsections 2(c)(i) to (vii) that occur in a place of worship are not exempted from the requirements imposed pursuant to subsections 2(a) to (i);*

This change affects activities outside of worship. The government liaison explains: "Places of worship continue to be exempt from proof of vaccination or negative test for anything related to worship services or ceremonies. However, other activities that might take place in a place of worship that would otherwise require proof of vaccination or negative test in another facility are now also required to do so in a place of worship."

The revised public health orders are found at: https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/public-health-measures/public-health-orders#current-public-health-orders

The following activities in a place of worship are EXEMPT from the proof of vaccination or negative test result requirement:

- **Meetings of the faith community for church governance, planning, faith formation (i.e. RCIA, catechetics, youth ministry, retreats and spiritual conferences etc.,) however remote from the act of worship;**
- **Wedding receptions or funeral luncheons following the event;**
- **Religiously-affiliated charitable organizations;**
- **Mental Health & Addictions and other 12 step programs are considered essential due to the well-being of the individuals and spiritual element;**

- **Christmas concerts and pageants are considered an extension of the worship service and so are exempt, even when held at a time separated from worship. The restriction in 2(c)(vii)(5) that applies to concert venues has been interpreted to only refer to large public venues.**

All activities related to the maintenance and support of the faith community are deemed to be religious activity and are EXEMPT from the proof of vaccination requirement.

If a place of worship is being used as a banquet facility for an event open to the public, proof of vaccination or negative test would be required. If the event is not open to the public (i.e. a wedding reception to which invitations are issued) proof of vaccination is not required.

The general dispensation to the faithful from the obligation to attend Mass continues to remain in effect. However, those who are not elderly or health compromised are strongly encouraged to make the Sunday and holy days of obligation.

Profound gratitude is again expressed to all who persevered in faith and charity during these times of challenge offering the Sacraments, ministry, and support in the many creative ways you have reached out to your people.

Please note the following directives remain in place:

1. Parishes are not required to restrict capacity, are not obliged to have parishioners sign up or register and contact tracing is not required.
2. Baptisms should continue as they were pre-pandemic with the exception of masking which is required.
3. The delegation to all pastors/administrators to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation for those baptized Catholic as infants or children whose Confirmation was postponed due to the pandemic has ended.
4. Confessionals may be used and alternative locations or arrangements can continue.
5. Holy water fonts can be filled.
6. Hand sanitizer and/or alternate sanitizing options should be available throughout the church.
7. Appropriate cleaning of high use areas within the church is still encouraged before and after each service.
8. All hymnals and missalettes are permitted in the pews. Single-use materials can still be considered.
9. Families are not required to maintain distance between their family and other families or individuals throughout the celebration of Mass.
10. **Masking for all parishes and ministry:**
    a. **All individuals require masks at all times with the exception of individuals under the age of two and those whose particular medical**

condition prevents them from wearing a mask as determined by a health professional.

b. **Masks are required for cantors, singers and soloists, with the exception of those at the ambo or podium in accordance with 10.c.**
c. **Speakers at podiums are not required to wear their mask while speaking to the congregation provided that there is a minimum 3 meters (10 feet) between the speaker and others. This means a priest and/or lectors are not required to use a mask provided that they are at least 3 meters (10 feet) from other members of the congregation.**

11. The procession at the Preparation of the Gifts may continue. Pastors may choose to have collection baskets (or any other materials) stationary and not to be passed from one family to another, however, the use of the offertory basket is not prohibited.
12. The Sign of Peace should continue to be omitted or done with a simple gesture, such as a reverent bow to avoid physical contact.
13. Mass may be celebrated with the participation of altar servers.
14. **The priest, and Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, must wear a mask and must sanitize his hands immediately before and after distributing Communion. Physical contact should be avoided when placing the host in the communicant's hands. Sanitize intermittently as necessary.**
15. **Distribution of the Holy Communion (Blood of Christ) from the chalice should continue to be omitted to the assembly.** For those who are gluten intolerant, special arrangements are to be made with the pastor.
16. **Those who choose to receive on the tongue should continue to be the last to receive. The minister of Holy Communion is to sanitize between each communicant and/or family.**
17. Celebrations and ancillary events may continue, food and drink may be served.
18. The standard pre-pandemic fire, health, privacy, and labour codes remain in effect.

Again, I thank pastors, parish communities and the faithful of the Diocese of Saskatoon for their patience and consideration throughout this time and for their support as we come out of the pandemic and move towards regular worship and parish activities.

Sincerely in Christ,

✠ Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen