

**Directive to Respond to COVID-19 Pandemic for the
Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas**

To the clergy, religious and all the faithful in the Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas:

We are in uncharted territory. We have watched as the COVID-19 virus has swept across the world. It is now upon us. Our response is being directed by our Governments; national, provincial and local. These are legitimate authorities and we must follow their directives. There is a concerted effort to stop this virus from spreading. As a nation we are asked to avoid congregating people. This is a time for us to give spiritual leadership. This is not a time to relinquish our faith. We must pray and lead our people to pray.

Our diocese also takes very seriously the observance of our Catholic liturgies and devotional practices. Given the extraordinary circumstances we face at this time – especially that place significant risks on certain members of our congregations (especially our elders and those who are infirm) taking dramatic action is necessary as it might save lives!

Directives: Effective immediately until further notice

- 1) Sunday Mass/Lay Led services are cancelled.** All weekend Masses are cancelled until further notice. For the duration of this period, I grant to all the Catholic faithful dispensation from their Sunday obligation. (cf. Code of Canon Law, 87) The Sunday Celebration of the Eucharist is the very heart of our Catholic life, and I realize that this directive will be a cause of great suffering. However, we observe this as our civic duty at this time, and offer this moment in sacrifice to God for the sake of all who are ill from the COVID-19 virus.

In these extraordinary circumstances, I encourage everyone to participate “remotely” in the Celebration of the Eucharist by tuning in to daily Mass on **Salt+Light TV** or **Vision TV**, or online at <https://dailytymass.com/>. In addition, the Diocese of Saskatoon will livestream Sunday Mass at 9:00 a.m. from Holy Family Cathedral. This can be accessed on their diocesan website at www.rcdos.ca.

The local pastor can determine about weekday Masses as long as it remains a small group and you can safely gather. I encourage our priests to continue celebrating masses for the community, for our Archdiocese and for the entire world at this time.

- 2) Holy Week Liturgies:** With respect to the Liturgies of Holy Week, further directions will be forthcoming in due course.

- 3) Sacrament of Confession:** Priests should be available to hear confessions keeping in mind we need to keep a 2 meter space between people. We also have to assure privacy. Group penitential services are forbidden.

- 4) Baptism:** these should be delayed for now. The exception to this would be a child in danger of death.

- 5) Funerals:** With the community and the family it should be decided how to have the funeral without bringing together a large crowd of people.

- 6) **Marriages** should be postponed for now. However, if this is not possible, the priest will consult with the couple to determine the following: the limitation of attendees to not exceed the official guidelines for group gatherings as well as following any other medical directives.

- 7) **Community Caring:** we encourage our parish communities to be mindful of the need to support fellow parishioners and other community members, especially elders, the sick, and those who might be otherwise home-bound. This will require local coordination to assure compliance with the Chief Medical Officer directives.

We encourage you to find ways of being a community in prayer. Invite people to say the rosary at a specific time of the day. Perhaps you could broadcast your homily or prayer on the local radio. Can we do anything on Facebook, You Tube? The phone remains a very safe way to support each other.

Our Churches are not closing; but we are not having larger groups of people come together. Your Church should be open for some time each day so that people can stop in and pray. There could be some times of adoration available to people.

Appropriate cleaning should be observed to provide a sanitary environment in Church. It is recommended that all hymnals, prayer cards, and other resource items should be removed during this time from the pews and other distribution points in the church. Especially in this uncertain and extraordinary time, we want to offer access to our churches to assure that the Church remains open to our people and ready to accompany them through this or any other difficulty.

Our governments are trying to flatten the curve of infection. As a Church we need to flatten the curve of fear, isolation and loneliness. These are stressful times and our presence in the communities can be one of providing counsel and prayer. The shepherd needs to be with his people.

No one knows how long this crisis is going to last. We will continue to update you as the best way to proceed becomes clear.

“Be not afraid, I go before you always.” Isaiah 43:1

Seek God’s presence.

Yours in Christ,

Archbishop Murray Chatlain

Fr. Jim Fiori OMI