



Diocese of Saint John Protocols for the Public Celebration of Masses and Other Religious Services in Level 3 of the GNB Covid-19 Winter Plan

“Outdoor, Virtual or In-Car Religious Services Only”

In the current Level 3 of the Covid-19 Winter Plan (effective January 14 at 11:59 p.m., until January 30 at 11:59 p.m.) churches are restricted to “outdoor, virtual, or in-car religious services only.” Parishioners are required to remain in their vehicle for the duration of the Mass. The dispensation from the Holy Obligation to attend Mass on Sunday is re-instated for the duration of this lockdown phase.

Priests are being asked to celebrate Mass daily for the intentions of parishioners and for those affected by COVID-19.

Pastors are encouraged to celebrate a Sunday Mass at a specific time within the church, and, if possible, livestream the Mass. If livestreaming is not possible, the parish could provide a resource for parishioners to participate in a Mass from home (ie. by providing a link to another livestream Mass, such as the Bishop’s Sunday Mass at 10 a.m. from the Cathedral on our Diocesan Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/DiocesefofSaintJohn>, or information for TV Mass). Following the Mass, at a predetermined time and time frame, parishioners could then proceed to the church to receive Communion, from their vehicle or at the door of the church, following the directions of staff and volunteers when they arrive. In order to maintain reverence for the reception of Holy Communion, even if connected to a Mass in which they have participated online or via the TV, a short Rite (see attached) should be celebrated before receiving Communion at one of the vehicle windows. Our priests have been instructed to take every precaution with hand sanitizing and ensuring, as best they can, the safety of all involved. In order to ensure reverence for the Eucharist, I would encourage parishioners to do their best to enter into the online or TV Masses in a spirit of prayer, maybe even designating a special prayer space for the viewing of the Mass with candles and a bible, not using their phone during Mass, observing the one hour Eucharistic fast, and maintaining a time of silence before and after the Mass, on their way to the church for the reception of Communion.

We presume that weddings and baptisms will need to be postponed, as will funerals, most likely, but this will depend on the revised Mandatory Order when it is published. Please see the following link for updates: <https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/corporate/promo/covid-19.html>, and click on the Covid-19 Mandatory Order button under Resources.

Church offices can remain open with an operational plan. We recommend that staff work from home as much as possible. Virtual platforms are encouraged for all parish meetings, religious education, and faith studies.

I would like to again express my deepest gratitude to our pastors, staff, pandemic protocol committees and volunteers for their continued dedication and hard work during these trying times. We are striving to do our best to keep everyone safe and healthy.

Mary, Health of the Sick, pray for us!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christian Riesbeck".

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC
Bishop of Saint John

January 13, 2022