

March 10, 2020: UPDATED Liturgical Guidelines: Coronavirus (COVID-19)

With charity to our brothers and sisters, particularly the elderly, those struggling with respiratory issues or other compromised immunity issues, and to supplement the guidance already communicated to our priests last week, the following common sense and more deliberate actions are to be taken in our parishes, schools and diocesan ministries:

- Just like with the annual flu or common cold, everyone needs to practice **good hygiene** beginning with washing hands for at least 20 seconds with **soap and hot water**.
- The use of an alcohol-based **anti-bacterial solution/gel** is also encouraged.
- **Don't come to Mass if you are sick:** Catholics are obliged to attend Mass on Sundays and other holy days of obligation. However, circumstances such as sickness and, for example, severe weather excuse the faithful of this obligation. In the instance that a person suspects being exposed to a contagion like the coronavirus, they as well as their caregivers, are dispensed from attending Mass by Bishop Johnston within the diocese for the duration of the condition's existence.

Per the advice of the CDC, our **elderly and others in determined frail health** who are quite susceptible to the coronavirus may likewise seek the same dispensation from Mass from their priest.

- **Physical contact at Mass:** Pastors and parishioners may limit the instances in which there is direct physical contact at Mass, such as avoiding holding hands at the Our Father. The Sign of Peace may be exchanged without contact but with words alone.
- **Receiving Holy Communion:** Those who are ill, or suspect they may have been exposed to a contagion due to one's travels or nearness to an infected individual, should refrain from receiving the Precious Blood from the chalice, and only receive the sacred Host. One is not permitted to dip the Host (intinction) as this is an illicit practice that only the priest may perform for a communicant as well as such an illicit practice may contaminate the Precious Blood in the chalice. As more direct contact with saliva and breathing on the Communion Minister's hand exists in distribution of Holy Communion on the tongue, anyone who suspects that they may be ill as well as anyone who is particularly susceptible to infection or complications should refrain from such reception. At their discretion, pastors may suspend distribution of the Precious Blood beyond the priests themselves.
- **Collections:** While not possible in all communities and for those parishes possessing collection baskets with long handles, ushers are encouraged to assist the faithful in receiving their contributions for the good of the Church with these handled baskets, further limiting multiple touches of passed baskets at this time of possible contagion.
- **Holy Water fonts:** Holy water in free standing fonts at the doorways should be changed very frequently, with water being poured into the ground. Baptismal fonts with flowing

water and recently installed filters remain sufficient to present conditions. Parishioners are not required to make use of holy water when blessing themselves before or after Mass at this time.

Again, the CDC is a good source of information and helpful practices. Resources for your home are available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/index.html>.