



March 12, 2020

To: Priests, Deacons, and Directors of Liturgy
From: +William M. Joensen, Ph.D., Bishop of Des Moines

With all of you, the Diocese continues to monitor the developing situation with COVID-19 (coronavirus), drawing upon recommendations from the Iowa Department of Public Health and the USCCB. We ask that you enact the following measures **immediately**:

- (1) The distribution of the chalice to the faithful is suspended in the Diocese of Des Moines until further notice (with the one permissible exception in [b] below):
 - (a) This is a good pastoral opportunity to remind the faithful that they receive the fullness of communion with our Eucharistic Lord in the Sacred Host.
 - (b) For those with a gluten intolerance: please make sure that they are aware of the low-gluten hosts approved for use by the USCCB. Parishes should have these available for parishioners to use. These hosts *must be approved for use by the USCCB*. Pastors may make available a small chalice with the Precious Blood to those with extreme gluten intolerance. (Please note, in whatever arrangement your parish adopts, sacred vessels must always be used.)
- (2) If persons are sick, do not feel well, or are immune-compromised, they should stay home. They are relieved of the Sunday Mass obligation for the sake of their health and that of the entire community.
- (3) Cease all forms of physical contact for the exchange of peace among the faithful; a nod, bow, or other visual sign shall substitute. Priests may still offer the liturgical peace with the faithful or omit it, in accord with the provisions already in the Roman Rite.
- (4) Suspend all other direct physical exchanges at church (e.g., by hospitality and Eucharistic ministers, among parishioners during the “Our Father”).
- (5) Regarding reception of the Eucharist: while liturgical norms recognize that no one can be prohibited from receiving the Sacred Host on the tongue, mutual charity subordinates personal devotion to the common good. To avoid transmission of germs through ministerial contact with saliva, reverential reception on a plainly open hand is commended.

- (6) Empty all Holy Water fonts. Holy Water may still be dispensed through larger vessels designed for this purpose.
- (7) Redouble efforts to maintain the highest levels of sanitation through handwashing, the washing of vessels, and the use of hand sanitizer.
- (8) Employ regular hygienic housekeeping practices in areas commonly touched by congregants (e.g. door handles, bathroom fixtures should be wiped down before and after Masses).
- (9) Eucharistic ministers to the homebound and institutions of care are urged to be extremely cautious in the performance of their ministries, and to be ready to suspend their outreach until the “all clear” signal is given by public health authorities.
- (10) It is praiseworthy if special petitions for health care workers, the sick and those who work to cure disease are included in the Universal Prayer/general petitions. Permission and encouragement is given for priests to celebrate on the weekdays of Lent with no other precept, Masses 45 & 46 of the Masses for Various Occasions: Masses for the Sick and Dying.

Please join me in praying for those who are sick, for individual and public health care providers on the front lines of this pandemic, for the deceased and those who mourn them, and for personal peace and common sense to prevail in our local and global communities.

St. Roch, St. Frances of Rome, and St. Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for us!

Faithfully in Christ,



Most Rev. William M. Joensen, Ph.D.
Bishop of Des Moines