

Dear Parishioners,

I hope this finds you well. Over the course of the past week, and especially in the past 24 hours, we have seen several developments concerning the spread of the COVID-19, or Coronavirus, throughout our nation and particularly here in our own State of Indiana. Having reviewed the statement of Governor Holcomb and as well as the clarifying guidance document for gatherings issued by the Indiana State Department of Health, the following is to take effect immediately.

- Archbishop Thompson has decided that, effective immediately, and until further notice, the faithful of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis are hereby dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass.

- That being said, the public celebration of the Mass and other sacraments and devotional activities will continue as scheduled. This would include regularly scheduled Masses, Confessions, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Stations of the Cross, funerals, etc (although you may wish to rethink communal penance services).

- o However, in light of the guidance document issued by the Health Department, those items listed in our previous March 5th memo on liturgical responses as optional should now be regarded as mandatory, namely:

- The exchange of the sign of peace is now suspended

- Holding hands during the recitation of the Lord's Prayer, if it is the local custom, is now suspended

- Distribution of Holy Communion via the chalice is to be suspended (some catechetical instruction may be needed as a reminder that Christ is wholly present under both species, both the host and/or the cup)

- The practice of physically touching a non-communicant for a blessing should be discontinued

- The use of Holy Water fonts is to be suspended and all holy water fonts are to be drained

- Priests, deacons and extraordinary ministers of holy communion should take care not to touch the hands, mouth or tongue of communicants.

- Other guidance regarding hygiene and sanitary measures should be observed.

- o Additionally,

- Outside of the celebration of the Extraordinary Form of the Mass, parishioners may be encouraged not to receive communion on the tongue during this extraordinary time of concern.

- Parishioners may be encouraged to disperse throughout the worship space so as to allow for "social distance" during gatherings.

- Hand sanitizer may be distributed at entrances for the faithful to use as they enter and exit church

- Parishes may seek alternatives to passing a basket for collections and for allowing more time before counting collections.

- The act of bringing forward the bread and wine by the faithful during the offertory may be suspended.
- While the acts of holding hands, shaking hands, hugging, etc. is suspended during the liturgy, the faithful should be reminded that these restrictions should be honored before and after Mass as well.
- Please respectfully, but repeatedly remind people that if they are feeling ill, they should stay at home

- Outside of Mass and other liturgical/devotional activities, all other parish activities and events are to be canceled, suspended or postponed.
 - oWith our schools closing during this time, all religious education, sacramental preparation classes, RCIA classes, youth and young adult ministry events and meetings are cancelled
 - oParish committee meetings, if possible, should also be cancelled
 - oAll special events, social gatherings, fish fries and other fundraises are to be cancelled (parishes with fish fries might consider pick up services)
 - oWhile the celebration of funerals and memorial Masses are to continue unimpeded, the offering of funeral meals should be suspended
 - oEvents by outside organizations using parish facilities should be evaluated on a case by case basis with regard to the guidelines set out by the Indiana Department of Health

- If at all possible, and in light of the cancellation of other parish activities, Parish offices are to remain open under normal business hours in order to provide for the pastoral care of the people

I appreciate that these actions are extraordinary, even while trying to address the guidance offered by our state health department. We will continue to evaluate these directives and make adjustments as the current crisis unfolds. If you have particular questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call. My cell phone number is (317) 258-5816.

Thank you for your cooperation during this time and the faithful ministry you offer. Know of my prayers for all of you. May God bless and keep you.

Peace,

Fr. Eric Johnson