



## **Coronavirus and the Liturgy**

Diocese of Madison Office of Worship, March 3, 2020

The Office of Worship has received calls expressing concern about the transmission of the Coronavirus at Mass. Please remind parishioners that there is no need to panic. Early indications show it is transmitted similar to influenza.

**Below are mandatory requirements, effective immediately, within the Diocese of Madison:**

- 1. Parishioners should refrain from touching others during the Mass (e.g., the Sign of Peace and the Our Father). The Sign of Peace may be: 1) omitted, or 2) retained if there is instruction in the use of non-contact gestures.**
- 2. As is the current policy, the Precious Blood should not be distributed, with due exception for celiac communicants, who for medical reasons receive from an independent chalice.**

Below are some suggestions to pastors and parochial administrators for possible implementation within the Diocese of Madison, based on their prudent discretion:

1. Common sense dictates much of the protocol for dealing with the coronavirus, the flu, and other respiratory diseases—frequently washing hands, covering coughs, etc...
2. Include at least one intercession at all daily and Sunday Masses asking God to heal those who have the coronavirus, to protect their caregivers, and/or for the development of cures or vaccines for the coronavirus.
3. You may wish to suggest to communicants that they consider receiving Holy Communion in the hand rather than in the mouth, but communicants should not be told they may only receive Holy Communion in the hand, and communicants should not be refused distribution of Holy Communion if they receive on the tongue.
4. Holy water fonts at the doors of the church may be emptied. The reason for this should be made known to the congregation. (Please do not fill them with sand or another material.)
5. If a parishioner is experiencing flu-like symptoms, (s)he should stay at home. *The Code of Canon Law* (1248.2) allows a person to miss Mass on a Sunday or holy day of obligation for a *grave reason*. Having a communicable disease is a grave reason. The law asks that, if possible, those who miss Mass for this reason spend a suitable time in prayer at home on their own or with the family. Missing Mass *for this reason* is not a sin.
6. As the coronavirus spreads, parishioners who have compromised immune system (the elderly, babies, those with an underlying illness, transplant recipients, etc...) may consider whether or not they should attend Mass for the same reasons cited in number 5 of this document.
7. All Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer immediately prior to distributing Holy Communion. Ordinary Ministers may wish to do the same. (n.b., please do not place hand sanitizer near the tabernacle. It's best if the handwashing is discreet.) If a person is visually sick (red eyes, runny nose, etc.) they should not distribute Holy Communion on that day.
8. Depending on the length of the coronavirus concern, people should be instructed not to kiss or touch the Cross while venerating it on Good Friday. Instead, they may genuflect or bow before the Cross as an act of veneration.
9. The parish should regularly sanitize "touchpoints," such as door handles, elevator buttons, confessionals, and backs of pews where people may place their hands.
10. The parish may wish to have hand sanitizer at the entrances to the church, in the confessional, in the sacristy, etc...
11. For the protection of the celebrant, deacon, and other ministers, and by extension the faithful, such ministers may decide that while greeting attendees after Mass, they refrain from shaking hands or touching others. The reason for this should be made known in advance to the congregation.