

Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

Health Updates

In response to concerns expressed by the faithful regarding the potential spread of the coronavirus illness (COVID-19) into our communities, the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston continues to monitor the health situation in the 10 counties within the Archdiocese.

Updated March 12, 2020

Yesterday, March 11, the City of Houston and Harris County issued an emergency health declaration for our local community in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston as a result of the developing story of the new presumptively positive case of Coronavirus characterized as “community spread” in Montgomery County, Texas.

In addition, the City of Houston informed the public of their decision to either reschedule or cancel all City sponsored and City permitted events for the remainder of the month of March as a precaution to prevent the spread of the virus.

MARCH 12 UPDATE

On March 12, due to recent developments, the Archdiocese is implementing a set of measures.

Liturgical Celebrations

At this time when the faithful need to maintain some degree of normalcy in the midst of the current health crisis, the Archdiocese is recommending that each parish continue to maintain their regular Mass schedules for all those who wish to participate. Any parishioners who are uncomfortable about attending Sunday Mass due to the coronavirus are excused from the obligation to attend. In addition, if a parishioner is in the higher risk category due to current illness, age, or suffering from a chronic health condition or compromised immune system, they are also asked to remain at home.

We are also compiling a list of parishes that currently live stream Sunday Masses over the internet. If your parish has this capability, please forward this information to Jonah Dycus (jdycus@archgh.org or 713-652-8270) so the name of your Parish and the Mass time(s) may be identified on our website as an alternative option for those who are unable to attend Sunday Mass in person.

Please ensure that the Offertory gifts of bread and wine are sufficiently covered and protected if they are placed at the entrance to the nave before the start of Mass. Individual parishes also have the discretion to determine whether to keep the bread and wine covered in a sacristy until the Offertory.

As a precaution, we are also recommending the use of latex gloves for ushers and money counters. To the extent that interior doors may be left propped open or are held open by ushers, this will minimize the need for individual Mass attendees to use their hands to open doors.

Other Planned Gatherings & Events

With regard to other upcoming gatherings and events, we are encouraging parishes to delay or cancel retreats and other events scheduled to occur off campus, particularly overnight activities until after April 30, 2020. Any gatherings or planned activities taking place on the premises of the parish should be reviewed by the Pastors in consultation with parish leadership, and make a prudential judgment in determining whether they should be rescheduled or canceled. Some factors to be considered include the expected number of attendees and any risk factors within that population, keeping in mind the CDC is recommending controlling large gatherings of 250 or more.

We are also asking that you give serious consideration to suspending coffee and donuts following Sunday Masses, as well as Lenten Fish Fry events; however, you have the discretion to determine whether this is an appropriate decision for your individual parish.

Religious Education & Sacramental Preparation

We ask you to please consult with the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis (Julie Blevins, jblevins@archgh.org or 713-741-8723) for guidance regarding suspending religious education instruction (possibly providing a home based method for parents to continue instruction away from the parish). In addition, the OEC staff is available to assist in addressing any questions regarding parent meetings for sacramental preparation and identifying alternatives to group gatherings.

Catholic Schools

The Superintendent of Catholic Schools and the staff of the Catholic School Office have been working diligently, in consultation with Principals in the Archdiocese, to ensure that the best decisions are being made for our school communities. In the event our Catholic schools need to suspend operations, schools have been sent resources to set up plans for instruction to continue electronically via the Internet, or they have been asked to create work assignments for up to two weeks for students to complete at home. The CSO is communicating directly with Principals regarding e-learning, closure concerns, etc.

Texas Medical Center Hospital Visits

It is the recommendation of the Catholic Chaplain Corps that if you have a parishioner in the Texas Medical Center that is in need of pastoral/sacramental care, please call the Catholic Chaplain Corps office 713-747-8445 and refer the family. The TMC hospitals have many new procedures and policies in place restricting access to patients on their campuses during this Coronavirus period. These TMC policies are changing rapidly as deemed necessary. All Masses in the TMC have been cancelled at this time until further notice.

This remains a dynamic and evolving situation. We will continue to monitor developments and will communicate any new recommendations or updates as soon as possible.

FEB. 29 UPDATE

Precautionary Measures - Coronavirus Illness (COVID-19)

On Feb. 29, the Archdiocese recommended [common sense steps and precautions](#) in regards to celebration of the Liturgy.

Until further notice, Galveston-Houston parishes will suspend the distribution of Holy Communion from the Chalice and distribute Holy Communion only under the form of the Host to help minimize any risk for the members of the liturgical assembly who are present for the reception of the Holy Eucharist.

We are also reminding all persons who are ill they are under no obligation to be present for Sunday Mass. Those attending liturgical assemblies are asked to respect that some may be uncomfortable with physical contact during times of the Mass, such as the Lord's Prayer or the Sign of Peace.

Please continue to pray for those in our communities and around the world who have died and for those who are sick and suffering.

Medidas de Precaución: Enfermedad por Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Feb. 29 - En respuesta a las preocupaciones expresadas por los fieles con respecto a la posible propagación de la enfermedad por coronavirus (COVID-19) en nuestras comunidades, la Arquidiócesis de Galveston-Houston recomienda pasos y precauciones de sentido común con respecto a la celebración de la liturgia.

Hasta nuevo aviso, las parroquias de Galveston-Houston suspenderán la distribución de la Sagrada Comunión del Cáliz y distribuirán la Sagrada Comunión solo bajo la forma de la Hostia para ayudar a minimizar

cualquier riesgo para los miembros de la asamblea litúrgica que están presentes para la recepción de la Santa Eucaristía.

También les recordamos a todas las personas que están enfermas que no tienen la obligación de estar presentes para la Misa Dominical. A los que asistan a las asambleas litúrgicas se les pide que respeten que algunos pueden sentirse incómodos con el contacto físico durante los momentos de la Misa, como el Padre Nuestro o el Signo de paz.

Continuemos orando por todos aquellos en nuestras comunidades y en todo el mundo que han muerto y por aquellos que están enfermos y sufriendo.

"As communities and public health officials respond to the outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in China and closely monitor its presence and progression in other parts of the world, we join in solidarity and prayer for those impacted or working to treat those infected by the disease. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Relief Services, and the Catholic Health Association of the United States hope that governments will work together in partnership to improve all nations' capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to this virus.

"The Catholic Church in the United States stands in solidarity with those affected by the coronavirus and their families, health workers who are valiantly trying to diagnose and treat patients, and those under quarantine awaiting results of their screening for the virus. We offer our prayers for healing and support those organizations, both domestic and international, working to provide medical supplies and assistance to address this serious risk to public health."

Source: U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Stay Healthy

Outbreaks of novel virus infections among people are always of public health concern, according to the CDC. The faithful can help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses with these actions.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.

- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- [Why? Read the science behind the recommendations.](#)

Source: Centers for Disease Control ([cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov))

Questions?

Not feeling well? See your doctor immediately. If you're unsure, call the [Memorial Hermann Nurse Health Line at 713-338-7979](#) (or toll-free 855-577-7979) and they'll help you decide. Registered nurses are available 24/7. This free line is open to anyone living in Houston or surrounding counties, with or without insurance.

Texas Department of State Health Services has a dedicated call center at **1-877-570-9779**, to answer COVID-19 related questions or concerns, available Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

¿Preguntas?

¿No te sientes bien? Consulte a su médico inmediatamente. Si no está seguro, llame a la [Línea de Salud de Enfermeras Memorial Hermann](#) al 713-338-7979 (o al teléfono gratuito 855-577-7979) y ellos le ayudarán a decidir. Las enfermeras registradas están disponibles las 24 horas del día, 7 días de la semana. Esta línea gratuita y bilingüe está abierta a cualquier persona que viva en Texas con o sin seguro médico.

El Departamento de Servicios de Salud del Estado de Texas tiene un centro de llamadas al 1-877-570-9779 dedicado a responder a preguntas o inquietudes relacionadas con COVID-19, disponible de lunes a viernes de 7 a.m. a 6 p.m.

St. Cecilia Church Update and Information

[Harris County Public Health](#) (HCPH) epidemiologists have been in contact with St. Cecilia Catholic Church in West Houston as part of their contact investigation. An individual who tested positive for COVID-19 attended mass at the church at 5:30pm Wednesday, Feb. 26th. Persons who sat approximately within 6 feet of the individual could have potentially been exposed to COVID-19. The individual sat in the very last row on the left side of the church as you face the altar. (This is not a new case of COVID-19, but this investigation is part of HCPH's existing diagnosed positive COVID-19 cases related to the travel group in Egypt).

As part of the investigation, HCPH is recommending that members of the public who sat in the last three rows on the left side (as you face the altar) at the 5:30 p.m. mass on Wednesday, Feb. 26th, contact Harris County Public Health at 713-439-6000 and contact their healthcare provider immediately (call before going) if they notice any symptoms. Additionally, any parishioner or church attendees experiencing symptoms associated with COVID-19 should stay home, away from other people, and contact their health provider for additional guidance. As a reminder, the symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Based on Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, parishioners should continue monitoring for these symptoms until March 11, 2020. HCPH will work with their healthcare provider if testing for COVID-19 is needed.

Since being notified, and with the support of Harris County Public Health, St. Cecilia has taken safety measures to clean and sanitize the area, including sanitizing pews and touchpoints throughout the church, draining and sanitizing baptismal fonts, and providing hand sanitizers at all entry points. We want to thank St. Cecilia Catholic Church leadership and its parishioners for their engagement and support during this investigation.

Santa Cecilia Iglesia de actualización e Información

Harris County Public Health (HPNC) epidemiólogos han estado en contacto con la iglesia católica St. Cecilia, en el oeste de Houston como parte de su investigación de contactos. Un individuo que dio positivo por COVID 19-masa asistido en la iglesia a las 5:30 de la tarde del miércoles, 26 de febrero Personas que se sentaba aproximadamente a 6 pies del individuo potencialmente podría haber estado expuesto a-19 COVID. El individuo se sentó en la última fila en el lado izquierdo de la iglesia, según se mira el altar. (Esto no es un nuevo caso de COVID-19, pero esta investigación es parte de diagnóstico existentes COVID-19 casos positivos de HPNC relacionados con el grupo de viaje en Egipto).

Como parte de la investigación, HPNC está recomendando que los miembros del público que se sentaba en los últimos tres filas en el lado izquierdo (según se mira el altar) en la masa 17:30 el miércoles de febrero 26 de contacto del Condado de Harris Pública salud en el 713-439-6000 y en contacto con su proveedor de atención médica de inmediato (llamada antes de ir) si notan algún síntoma. Además, cualquier asistente feligrés de la iglesia o que experimentan síntomas asociados con COVID-19 deben quedarse en casa, lejos de otras personas, y contactar con su proveedor de salud para obtener orientación adicional. A modo de recordatorio, los síntomas incluyen:

- Fiebre
- Tos
- Dificultad para respirar

Sobre la base de Centro de Control de Enfermedades y pautas de prevención (CDC), los feligreses deben continuar monitoreando para estos síntomas hasta el 11 de marzo de 2020. HPNC trabajará con su proveedor de atención médica si la prueba es necesaria para COVID-19.

Desde que fue notificado, y con el apoyo del condado de Harris Salud Pública, Santa Cecilia ha tomado medidas de seguridad para limpiar y desinfectar la zona, incluyendo la desinfección de los bancos y de los puntos de contacto en toda la iglesia, drenaje y saneamiento de las pilas bautismales, y proporcionando los desinfectantes de manos en todas las entradas puntos. Queremos agradecer a líderes de la Iglesia Católica Santa Cecilia y sus feligreses por su compromiso y apoyo durante esta investigación.