



DIocese OF LAFAYETTE

1408 CARMEL DRIVE

LAFAYETTE, LOUISIANA 70501-5215

TELEPHONE: 337-261-5614 FAX: 337-261-5603

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

March 4, 2020

Dear Diocesan Family:

As a community of faith, we stand in solidarity with those affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19). As Christians, we trust in God and also respond as stewards of the common good. I encourage everyone to heed the directions and advice of healthcare officials as we go about our daily duties.

As Catholics, our primary place of gathering and prayer is in the context of prayer and worship. In view of the fact that there are confirmed cases of the coronavirus in the United States, I wish to inform you of the following directives as they relate to the celebration of the Liturgy in the Diocese of Lafayette:

1. It is important that if you have symptoms of illness (respiratory symptoms—coughing, sneezing, shortness of breath, and/or a temperature above 100°F), you should not attend Mass or other services/gatherings. As shepherd of our Diocese, I remind you of the teaching of the Catechism that is not sinful to miss Mass when one is sick (CCC no. 2181). In fact, remaining at home under these circumstances is an act of charity.
2. I have asked all Ministers of Holy Communion to sanitize their hands shortly before the distribution of Holy Communion.
3. I am recommending but not requiring that the faithful receive Holy Communion in the hand; though no one is to be denied Holy Communion on the tongue.
4. While Communion under both species is commendable, priests are to refrain from offering the chalice with the Precious Blood at Masses at this time.
5. At the judgment of the Pastor, the greeting of peace may be omitted or substituted. When not omitted, it is appropriate to offer the sign of peace with a nod or bow of the head.
6. I ask that you not hold hands during the recitation of the Our Father.

These directives shall remain in effect until the current health cautions are ended. If the situation worsens, further restrictions may be necessary; nevertheless, we continue to monitor the situation in contact with civil authorities.

I have encouraged the practice of the family rosary in our Diocese. Whether in individual or private recitation of the rosary, I ask that you to pray especially for victims of the coronavirus, their families, healthcare workers, government officials and for an end to this current health crisis, both domestically and internationally. On March 19th of this year, we will begin a special year in honor of Saint Joseph, Protector of the Universal Church. Let us implore the intercession of Saint Joseph, to protect the human family and to strengthen all who are working to address this serious risk to our public health. With every good wish, I am

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend J. Douglas Deshotel
Bishop of Lafayette