

May 21, 2000: Making use of all the resources available

We are working on what needs to be in place for when people start returning to Mass. Hand sanitizer, for example, will have to be readily available. If we are going to have communion, for example, which requires coming close to one another, there will need to be hand sanitizer to reduce right at that point the possibility of transmission of the virus. I and the other ministers of communion will be sanitizing our hands right before the distribution of communion and hand sanitizer will be placed at each communion station in the event that we should inadvertently touch the hand of the one receiving. (More about the reception of communion later.)

At this point, we have about four gallons of hand sanitizer that will be placed at the entrances of church. Through archdiocesan purchasing we can get more. What will be helpful, though, is if each person who comes to Mass would have a small bottle with them—the kind that you find in the drugstore to use when traveling, so that you could sanitize your hands before receiving communion, too. If you can put hand sanitizer in that small bottle before coming to Mass, that would be great. If you need hand sanitizer to take with you to your pew, you could put some in it from the larger container at the door of the church.

Of course, washing hands is the first line of defense in breaking the chain of transmission. Practicing good hygiene is a given. Washing hands before Mass starts is standard practice for me and all the communion ministers. The hand sanitizer is the added level of protection available in Mass itself. It will help keep the “viral load” of the encounter to a minimum, so we are going to avail ourselves of that resource. Once again, those who are sick will need to stay home, and those who can easily get sick will need to stay home, too.