



Diocese of Helena

Date: March 13, 2020
Re: **UPDATED** Diocesan Response to COVID-19

Approved: *+ Austin A. Vetter*

A bit earlier this evening, Governor Steve Bullock confirmed four presumptively positive cases of COVID-19 (coronavirus) in Montana – one each in Yellowstone, Gallatin, Silver Bow, and Lewis and Clark Counties. The Governor urges taking proper precautions and following public health recommendations.

In light of this announcement, Bishop Austin Vetter is modifying the Diocesan Epidemic Response as follows:

- Beginning the weekend of **March 14-15, 2020**, Bishop Vetter is dispensing the faithful of the Diocese of Helena from the obligation to participate at Sunday Mass.
- Also beginning March 14, 2020, Bishop Vetter is temporarily suspending the distribution of the Blood of Christ.

Parish Masses will continue as currently scheduled. Given the dispensation, the faithful may wish to consider participating at a parish daily Mass rather than on Sunday to avoid crowded situations.

Other provisions communicated in Bishop's March 11 Diocesan Epidemic Response remain in effect, including:

- If there is concern, bless yourself without touching the holy water when entering/leaving the Church.
- You are encouraged to wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizer prior to Mass.
- You are encouraged to receive the Body of Christ in the hand, since receiving Communion on the tongue can be a vehicle for transmitting disease.
- It is possible to share the greeting of peace by speaking the words "peace be with you" without touching.
- Anyone who is sick should stay at home and not participate in liturgical celebrations.

At this point, the Men's Retreat, the CYC Convention, and the Woman's Retreat have been cancelled or rescheduled. Those impacted will receive information from the sponsors.

Please check the diocesan website, your email, social media, next week for updated information.