

### **STEP THREE – WITH MODIFICATIONS – EFFECTIVE 3/17/20 – REVISED – SEE HIGHLIGHTED TEXT**

On Saturday, March 14, Governor Reynolds announced new mitigation measures to help curb the spread of COVID-19 within Iowa. The social distancing interventions being called for are consistent with STEP THREE in our policy. At the same time, we are well aware that the time to act is now if we are to have a significant impact on how fast the virus spreads in our communities. Therefore, we will be going beyond what is called for in our STEP THREE.

We do not take these steps lightly, especially the cancellation of almost all public worship within the diocese. The sacraments, and especially the Eucharist, lie at the heart of who we are as Catholics. But the common good calls us to make this sacrifice. It is clear from accounts from around the world that urgent action is needed if we are to avoid overwhelming our health care system. Our prayer is that this form of Lenten fasting will put us in deeper solidarity with those going with so much less, with those who will be—and are being—severely affected by this outbreak.

It is impossible to foresee how long these restrictions will be in place. The CDC recently recommended that large group gatherings be suspended for at least the next eight weeks. The restriction of gatherings to 10 persons is expected to last 15 days; we will notify the diocese when this changes.

This is a list of the key changes being made to church life, until further notice. The details of the policy are included below:

- **All public celebrations of the Mass (and all other public liturgies or devotions) are to be cancelled.**
  - Baptisms, weddings, and funerals may be celebrated with immediate family members only.
  - Individual Confession and Anointing of the Sick may be celebrated.
- **All Catholics in the Diocese of Davenport are dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass.**
- If you are sick, or if you are caring for someone who is sick, please stay home.
  - Those who are 60 years of age or older, and those with underlying health conditions, should stay at home and avoid all gatherings or other situations of potential exposure.
- All large group meetings, conferences, retreats and the like in the diocese are to be cancelled.
- All faith formation classes and activities are to be cancelled (use electronic formats if possible).
- Small office meetings may take place if essential, but it is preferable to meet electronically.
  - Encourage staff, especially those at risk for severe illness, to telework (when feasible).
  - Limit non-essential work travel.
- All Catholic schools will be closed, at least until April 13. All extracurricular events are to be cancelled.
  - Further guidance will be forthcoming from the Office of the Superintendent.

This is also a time of great financial uncertainty. We can expect that income from investments and donations will be affected by the spread of COVID-19, calling for careful and prudent fiscal stewardship. Guidance from the Diocesan Finance Office will be sent separately.

As we move to STEP THREE, please submit the parish report form (<https://www.davenportdiocese.org/diocesan-entity-report-form>) and continue to do so weekly.

**Policies Relating to Planning for Seasonal & Pandemic Influenza (and other Infectious Disease Outbreaks)**

**§II-9102.3 Response to Threat: Step 3 – Modified (see notes in red)**

*Personal Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs)*

a) People are asked to stay home if ill or someone in their household is ill. Post signs describing what practices are in effect; announce changes using various media (newsletter, bulletin, website, at Mass). See Appendices I and J.

- *In addition, those who are 60 years of age or older, and those with underlying health conditions that put them at risk from COVID-19 (such as heart or lung disease, diabetes, or a weakened immune system) should stay at home and avoid all gatherings or other situations of potential exposure.*
- *Parishes and schools are to modify work practices accordingly.*
- *Priests are to be prudent in balancing the need to provide pastoral care and the need to exercise proper self-care, keeping in mind the encouragement of Pope Francis “to go out and go to the sick people bringing the strength of God’s word and the Eucharist, and accompany the health workers and volunteers in this work that they are doing.”*

*Environmental NPIs*

b) Staff or volunteers to clean door handles and other hard surfaces (such as pews, water fountains, desks, tables, countertops washrooms) with disinfectants; to wear masks, gloves, and goggles when doing so and when emptying trash receptacles. Disinfectant wipes should be available for staff/volunteers to use in their offices.

1. Disinfecting should be done in churches and chapels after each Liturgy (at least daily)
2. Disinfecting should be done in schools and faith formation or other programs after each class transfer or after each gathering.

c) Empty all baptismal and holy water fonts, including those that allow for full immersion; parishes should have pre-filled bottles of holy water available. See section on Baptisms below.

- *All fonts are to be emptied. Parishes may make small bottles of holy water available for parishioners to take home.*

*Community NPIs*

d) Large group meetings should be postponed if at all possible. If not, participants should be seated with at least a 6’ distance between individuals. Consider holding meetings using web-based platforms.

- *All large (> 50 people) group meetings, conferences, retreats and the like in the diocese are to be cancelled. Small office meetings (such as a parish staff) may take place if essential. It is preferable that such meetings take place electronically. Any in-person meetings must assure appropriate social distancing (6’).*

e) Schools and Faith Formation / Other Group Gatherings

1. Directives from public health authorities regarding closures or other modifications are to be followed.
- *Catholic schools will be closed, at least until April 13.*

2. If large groups are prohibited from meeting, parish and school administrators, with their staffs, should prepare and distribute catechetical or academic resources (for example, lesson plans and catechetical materials for children, as well as home prayer resources (see Appendix A and Appendix K).

- *In keeping with (d) above, all faith formation offerings are to be cancelled. Arrangements should be made for formation to take place via an electronic platform if at all possible.*

3. Social Distancing (it is recommended that a distance of 6 feet be maintained between all individuals)

- a. School ought to use e-mail for attendance and lunch counts and configure classroom seating to maintain 6' distance (e.g. every other desk, if possible). Expect that this will be difficult for children to do consistently. Also, be aware that children will need repeated reminders and explanations as to why these measures are necessary. Reminders and explanations should be delivered in a calm manner, so as not to be frightening.
- b. Contact sports (competition and practice), dances, retreats, youth rallies, and the like will be suspended.
- c. Thought should be given to also canceling plays, concerts, lectures/assemblies, and non-contact sporting events. In the event that they are held, seating is to be limited to every other row.

- *All extracurricular events (b & c) are to be cancelled.*

f) Be aware of travel restrictions, and the risks of travel to areas of concern (such as not being able to return or of being quarantined). Be ready to cancel trips to such areas (either within or outside the US).

1. All non-essential travel outside of the Diocese by clergy is suspended.
2. All non-essential business travel by lay staff is also suspended.

#### *Specific NPIs related to Liturgy*

g) In addition to previous provisions, the following changes are made:

1. Practices at Mass

- a. The person preparing wine and hosts for Mass is to wear a mask; non-latex gloves may be used (see Appendix G). The vessels containing the bread and wine are to remain covered until placed on the altar.
- b. Distribute diocesan home prayer booklet and other resources in case large group gatherings are suspended by Public Health authorities. See Appendix K.
- c. Collection baskets are not to be passed person-to-person. It is preferred that a collection basket or locked "poor box" be placed at the entrance(s) of the church; alternatively, baskets with handles may be used (in which case ushers are to wear gloves and immediately wash their hands after the collection). Because the influenza virus can remain viable on surfaces for some time, the money collected is to be "quarantined" for 3 days<sup>1</sup> before being counted. Those removing money from the collection baskets or boxes are to wear gloves and wash their hands afterwards. The collection is not carried in procession as part of the preparation of the gifts and altar.
- d. Worship aids, if used, should be printed for each occasion and then destroyed. Applicable copyright laws ought to be followed. Missalettes and song books should not be used.
- e. The assembly will be seated in alternating rows, thereby increasing distance between individuals. In addition, it may become necessary to limit the number of individuals present for any one Mass.
- f. Non-essential gatherings—such as Children's Liturgy of the Word and post-Mass social gatherings / refreshments—are to be cancelled.
- g. The communal celebration of the Anointing of the Sick at Mass is strongly discouraged. If celebrated, a

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<sup>1</sup> If the infection in question is influenza. This number may change if another virus is involved.

single-use instrument (such as a cotton swab) is used for the anointing.

- *All Catholics in the Diocese of Davenport are dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. Instead, they are urged to pray in union with the Church on the Lord's Day.*
- *All public celebrations of the Mass are to be cancelled. Liturgies of communal reconciliation and communal anointing of the sick, public exposition and adoration (including perpetual adoration), the Stations of the Cross, or other public gatherings for prayer are to be cancelled. The sign included at the end of this document (p. 6) is to be displayed at all entrances.*
  - *Priests are encouraged to celebrate Mass without a congregation (alone or with one other priest- such as a pastor and parochial vicar together).*
  - *Thought should be given to live-streaming or recording Mass and then having it available for parishioners to access electronically, observing all licensure and copyright matters.*
- *If possible, pastors are to open the church building at certain times to allow individuals access for private prayer. People are to be reminded to not enter if ill, to practice appropriate handwashing and cough hygiene, and to remain at least 6 feet apart. **No more than 50 10 people** should be in the church at any given time (the number may need to be less in smaller buildings in order to keep the 6' distance between persons). The sign included at the end of this document (p. 7) is to be posted (changing the maximum number if needed). Surfaces should be regularly cleaned and disinfected.*
  - *"24 Hours for the Lord" is essentially a time during which the church is open for private prayer before the exposed Blessed Sacrament, while the opportunity for Reconciliation is provided. These may take place, as long as the social distancing measures mentioned above are carefully followed. Those at high-risk for severe COVID-19 disease should be told not to take part in these events. Pastors may choose to cancel these events.*
- *Baptisms, weddings, and funerals may be celebrated as detailed below. Only immediate family is to be in attendance, and attendance should be kept at a minimum. **No more than 50 10 persons** should be present. Proper social distancing (6') is to be maintained.*

## 2. Reconciliation

- a. The use of "box" confessionals is suspended.
- b. A distance of 6 feet is to be maintained between penitent and confessor. Hard surfaces in the room used for reconciliation, including the screen, are to be disinfected after each visit.
- c. Penitents who are ill should arrange for the priest to celebrate the sacrament in their homes.
- d. At home or at church, if the person is infected, he/she should have tissues and be asked to cover his/her mouth and nose when coughing and to put the tissues into a wastepaper basket or box. The priest and penitent may consider wearing a mask (and offering a mask to those who are ill). (See Appendix G)

## 3. Baptisms

- a. Only immediate family and godparents are to attend (only if they have not been exposed to the flu).
- b. There are to be no large group baptisms.
- c. Fresh water is to be used for each baptism, and then discarded properly afterwards. If more than one person is being baptized, the water is to be blessed in individual vessels and then poured over the candidate into the font.

## 4. Weddings – ALL WEDDINGS ARE TO BE CELEBRATED OUTSIDE OF MASS

- a. Only immediate family and witnesses are to attend (only if they have not been exposed to the flu).
- b. Clergy are not to attend related social functions; parishes are not to host receptions.

## 5. Funerals – ALL FUNERAL LITURGIES ARE TO BE CELEBRATED OUTSIDE OF MASS

- a. Be aware that there could be an increased need for funeral services and pastoral care to the bereaved.
- b. The liturgical celebrations may need to be altered, both to prevent spread of influenza and because of time and energy constraints:

- i. the Funeral Vigil may be omitted, or the time at a “wake” shortened,
  - ii. the Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass should be used,
  - iii. the Rite of Committal is used (outdoors if possible); if not celebrated in conjunction with the Funeral Liturgy, it may be celebrated with the rite of Final Commendation (see OCF #224-233).
  - iv. priests should make use of deacons and lay Parish Life Coordinators (who may preside over the vigil, funeral liturgy, and rite of committal) and trained lay leaders of prayer (who may preside over the vigil and rite of committal) in order to prevent becoming overwhelmed (see OCF #14).
- c. Only immediate family is to attend the funeral liturgies. Plans for memorial Masses after the pandemic resolves should be made.

#### *Specific NPIs related to Pastoral Care*

h) In providing pastoral care to the sick:

1. Activate the deanery plan to care for those who are quarantined or home-bound, such as regular phone or e-mail contact. Coordinate with parish nurse(s) and other outreach ministries. Stress the importance of thorough handwashing.
  - a. The activation of Step 3 includes permission, if necessary, for a priest other than the pastor to anoint the sick (c. 1003.2) and for another priest, deacon, or EMHC to celebrate the *Rite of Viaticum* in the pastor’s absence (c. 911). See Appendix K.
2. The advice of public health officials in regards to the use of masks (and other PPE) is to be followed. Absent such guidance, or if left to individual discretion, the following steps are to be taken:
  - a. If the person being visited is ill with the infectious agent causing the outbreak, gloves and masks are worn for pastoral visits, including for the Anointing of the Sick.
    - i. If able to be worn safely and correctly, the use of an N95 respirator should be considered.
    - ii. Gloves smeared with oil are to be placed in a sealed bag and later burned or buried. In case of necessity, the priest may use a suitable instrument (e.g., a cotton-tipped swab) to anoint in order to avoid direct physical contact. In such cases, the instrument must also be disposed of by burning or burial. If gloves are not worn for the anointing, meticulous handwashing will be necessary. Consider adding Tea Tree Oil to the Oil of the Sick (see Appendix G).
  - b. If the person being visited is not ill with the infectious agent causing the outbreak, the minister will wear a mask in order to protect that individual.

#### *Reporting*

i) Parishes, deaneries, and schools are to keep the Diocese informed re: status of their preparations and their communities. The chancery is to review the information submitted. Reports (Appendix E) should be submitted weekly.

#### *Managing Supplies*

j) Supplies are assessed daily by maintenance, kitchen, and office staff. Supplies are replenished 3 times/week.