



Roman Catholic
Diocese of Tucson
Office of the Bishop

March 5, 2020

**Diocese of Tucson Protocol
Seasonal Flu and Coronavirus**

While the danger of the coronavirus in Arizona is quite low, I am aware that many are concerned about preventing any possible spread of the virus through contact at our churches. Actually, at this time the far greater risk for most people is the seasonal flu which has already taken the lives of thousands across the U.S. I strongly urge all Catholics who have not yet had a seasonal flu shot to get one immediately, unless recommended otherwise by your healthcare professional. If the coronavirus were to become serious, the thousands of hospital beds annually used for flu victims would be needed for others. I also urge all who are sick with any communicable illness — especially head colds or flu — to stay home from Mass as an act of charity. Note too, the Sunday Mass obligation is a most serious matter, but it is always suspended for those who are ill.

In addition to these two fundamental practices, as a precautionary matter I recommend any or all of the following, at the discretion of the local pastor:

- Parishes are to refrain from the use of Holy Water fonts for the immediate future.
- Parishioners are to express the “Sign of Peace” at Mass in a way that does not involve human touch, such as a small bow.
- Pastors are to urge all parishioners to wash hand frequently. Special Ministers of Holy Communion (Eucharistic Ministers) are to wash their hands before and after the distribution of Holy Communion and to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Pastors are to suspend the use of the Chalice for the congregation for the immediate future.
- As receiving Holy Communion on the tongue almost always involves some accidental touch with tongues and lips, Holy Communion should be distributed only in the hand for the immediate future.
- Pastors are to ensure a thorough cleansing with soap and hot water of all Communion vessels following Mass.
- Congregations are to suspend holding hands during the Our Father Prayer, for those parishes where this may be a local custom.

+Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger