



DIOCESE
of
LAFAYETTE-IN-INDIANA

March 12, 2020

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to be a prevalent and ongoing health concern across our country. As a result of Governor Holcomb's announcement from March 12 that non-essential gatherings must be limited to no more than 250 people, Bishop Doherty is dispensing from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass, but regularly scheduled public Masses will go on. As the situation evolves, we will keep you updated on this matter. This is not a permanent dispensation.

Below are some additional guidelines for our parishes, schools and administration.

Communications:

- The Office of Communications will continue to be the official channel of diocesan communication should an outbreak occur.
- If there is a request to respond to the media, please contact Gabby Hlavek (ghlavek@dol-in.org).
- If there are updates on your local situation please contact Caroline Ching (cching@dol-in.org) (765) 269-4602. She will share this information with the pertinent offices.

We continue to encourage healthy habits in all of our facilities during school and work hours such as hand-washing and monitoring students/employees/volunteers for flu-like symptoms. All of our facilities should be working very diligently to be disinfecting on a regular basis and advising anyone who is sick or at a higher risk of contracting the virus to stay home.

While we recommend that you frequently check your [local health department's](#) updates, the [World Health Organization](#) website and the [Indiana State Department of Health](#) for updates, we are also issuing some updated guidelines for addressing some frequently asked questions below.

Schools:

- Our Catholic Schools should follow what the local/county schools are doing in your area; if a school in your county should close due to an outbreak, our schools in the same area should do the same.
- We will follow similar regulations regarding school sporting events; if local corporations or schools should cancel, our schools are advised to do the same.
- If a gym or large meeting space in your school was going to be used for an external gathering (Knights of Columbus, youth retreat) it should be canceled.
- Please ensure that you have a communications plan/notification program for parents; this should be available in each school and religious education program should immediate notification be needed.



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College Campus Centers/Newman Centers:

- Should follow the same protocol as the university they are associated with; if the schools are closed, so should our campus gathering spaces.

St. Joseph Retreat and Conference Center

- At this time, we are not requiring any retreats to be canceled. The retreat center should follow the recommendations of the Tipton County Health Department.
- Group leaders are encouraged to use their best judgement as to whether or not their retreat should still be held in our facility.
- SJRCC should be diligently cleaning and disinfecting all areas around the facility and food preparation area.

Parishes:

- Bishop Doherty is dispensing from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass, but regularly scheduled public Masses will go on; this is in response to Governor Holcomb's announcement from March 12 that non-essential gatherings must be limited to no more than 250 people. This is not a permanent dispensation and we will provide updates as the situation evolves.
- If county schools are closed, then religious education and youth ministry events should be canceled as well.
- All elderly (as defined by the health department as 60+ years of age) volunteers and those with compromised immune systems should stay home.
- Non-essential vendors/visitors should not visit your facility at this time.
- All nursing home and home-bound visits should be canceled; our older clergy need to be very careful and use their discretion about making these visits.
- Weddings/Funerals/Confirmations will continue as planned unless further recommendations are issued by the local health department.
 - We do recommend no funeral lunches after the Mass at this time.
- Counters should use caution during this process and gloves, if available.
- Parish meetings and small gatherings may continue as planned unless further recommendations are issued by the local health department.
- Continue to communicate in parish bulletins that parishioners are dispensed from Mass if they are sick.



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For Liturgical Celebrations, the Bishop has revised his previous guidelines.

Precautionary measures that *should* apply at this time:

- Urge priests, deacons, altar servers, sacristans and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to practice good hygiene, washing their hands before Mass begins or even using an alcohol based anti-bacterial solution before handling the vessels and the bread and wine for set up for Mass and before and after the distribution of Holy Communion.
- Suspend the use of the chalice for distribution of Holy Communion until Easter; we will reevaluate at that time and advise our recommendations.
- Ensure all vessels used at Mass, once purified, are thoroughly washed with soap and hot water after each use.
- Assure the faithful that if they are sick or are experiencing symptoms of sickness, they are not obliged to attend Mass, and even that out of charity they ought not to attend (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2181).
- At the Offertory, the presentation of the gifts should be suspended.
- Do not pass collection baskets but have a defined protocol as to how you will collect in one location before or after Mass; usher supervision is required so the collection does not 'walk away'.
- The celebrant is to direct that reception of the Consecrated Host is only in the hand; this is actually the norm in the U.S. per the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM). This will limit contact with saliva and the potential spread of the virus. Request that persons who insist on receiving the Eucharist on the tongue wait to the end of Holy Communion in order to be the final communicants, limiting possible virus transmission. This is requested as an act of charity toward their brothers and sisters in the congregation.
- Suspend the exchange of the sign of peace (or instructing that it be exchanged without physical contact – examples could include a bow of the head or a wave to others).
- Suspend the holding of hands during the Lord's prayer.
- Offer the catechetical reminder that Christ is wholly and permanently present under *both* of the consecrated species, both the bread and/or the wine.
- Discontinue the practice of touching a non-communicant for a blessing.
- Refrain from using Holy Water fonts.

Precautionary measures that *should* apply at this time:

- Schedule one specific Mass time for your elderly parishioners.
- Include bulletin announcements and/or hanging communications in gathering spaces as a reminder that if you are not well, to stay home.



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As a reminder, below are some additional steps that the CDC recommends to help prevent the spread of germs:

- Stay home when sick. The recommended time frame is to stay home until fever free for at least 24 hours.
- Avoid touching eyes, mouth, or nose with unwashed hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home/work place.
- Cover a cough or sneeze with a tissue. If one is not available, cover cough or sneeze with the inside of your elbow. Immediately dispose of used tissues.

Technology and Working from Home:

With regards to the potential implications of the Coronavirus on staff, that is a staff person unable to enter the workplace but otherwise able to work from home, the following is offered.

- In order for a staff person to work from home there are prerequisites that need to be in place.
- Here are some of the technology components and processes that are needed:
 - The documents and files that the employees will need to execute their work must be stored electronically in a secure repository designed to provide workgroup (team, department, etc.) collaboration.
 - *An example would be Microsoft Office Teams*
 - Such repositories require the implementation of controls that ensure that staff have the appropriate access to documents and files based upon their role and responsibilities.
 - Policies and procedures must be in place, and the employees aware of said policies and procedures, to ensure security and confidentiality protocols are observed.
 - Credentials issued to the employees that allow them to access the hosting platform where the repository and supporting applications reside.
 - These systems should be commonly used in the daily operations of the office thus the repositories will be current with the last point in time that the employee was working in the office.
- If these technologies policies and procedures are not already in place and commonly used, then a “working from home” response to this medical event will not be possible.
- If you already have these capabilities then it is recommended that you review these technologies with staff. Ensure that your staff is familiar with and using these technologies as part of the daily execution of their work and, review with them how to access these system from a remote location (home) if there is a need in the coming days to activate a work from home posture.
- Taking a forward-looking perspective and as we move into the new culture that is Uniting in Heart these technologies are part of the standards already adopted and in use in the Chancery. In the coming months, these capabilities will be extended to the pastorates so that across the diocese we are able to respond effectively to situations that require us to continue to provide for the wellbeing of our parishes and schools.



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You can find additional guidance from the CDC for your home [here](#).

If you have questions regarding sick time or other human resources policies should one of your teachers or staff become sick with the coronavirus, please contact our Office of Human Resources. Depending on the severity of an individual's illness, a coronavirus case most likely will be considered an FMLA-qualifying serious health condition that would allow an employee of a covered employer (generally, an employer with 50 or more employees) to take job-protected FMLA leave, with healthcare benefit continuation, to care for themselves or a close relative (a parent, spouse or child). If any conditions in our diocesan community change, we will further communicate with you.

Let us all continue to pray for all those affected by the Coronavirus.

Additional Resources

Links:

- Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>
- Guidance for Schools - CDC
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-for-schools.html>
- Guidance for parents – CDC
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/index.html>
- Regular updates from the Indiana Health Department on the coronavirus:
<https://www.in.gov/isdh/28470.htm>
- For more information about cleaning supplies and equipment
https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list_03-03-2020.pdf