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To priests of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie

Re : Suggested precautions to avoid infection from coronavirus (COVID – 19)

Dear brother priests,

Faced with the coronavirus epidemic in certain countries and the threat of contagion around the world, certain priests and parishioners are wondering what precautions we should take during our liturgies to avoid spreading the virus. Based on the suggestions made in 2009 during the H1N1 epidemic, I ask you to consider the following elements, until further notice.

General principles of good hygiene

This includes frequent hand-washing with soap and water and use of a hand sanitizer. People with flu-like symptoms are advised to stay home in order to avoid spreading infections. Therefore, I exempt all persons with flu-like symptoms from the obligation to participate in Sunday Mass.

Sign of peace

- a) As a sign of peace, we can bow or use a similar gesture.
- b) It is not advisable to shake hands or to have any other physical contact.

Reception of Holy Communion

Each person is encouraged to à

- receive communion in the hand and immediately consume the host.
- refrain from receiving communion on the tongue, if one has cold or flu symptoms
- refrain from drinking from the chalice.

Communion ministers

All ministers of communion must apply the principles of good hygiene before and after the distribution of communion.

- a) People with symptoms of cold or flu should avoid being ministers of communion.
- b) Before distributing communion, all ministers of communion will use a hand sanitizer placed either on the credenza or in another suitable place. This gesture is not liturgical, therefore it should be done discretely.
- c) Immediately after distribution of communion, ministers of communion must use a hand sanitizer.

d) Hosts should be touched as little as possible.

A sufficient number of ciboriums must be placed on the altar during the Eucharistic Liturgy, so as to avoid transferring the hosts by hand from one ciborium to another.

Once distribution of communion is over, avoid touching hosts as you transfer them into a ciborium to be stored in the tabernacle.

e) People preparing sacred vessels for bread, wine and communion should apply the principles of good hygiene, including frequent use of hand sanitizer or soap and water.

Holy water

The holy water fonts at the church entrance must be empty

Thank you for considering these precautions. Together, let us pray that this epidemic will soon be controlled in all countries of the world.



+Marcel Damphousse
Bishop of Sault Ste. Marie