



DIOCESE OF SUPERIOR OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

March 12, 2020

To the Faithful of the Diocese of Superior,

As we are all aware, we are being inundated with warnings about COVID-19 or what is commonly known as the “coronavirus”. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) are telling us that we need to take seriously the spread of this virus. At the same time, they are also telling us not to go into panic mode. So, where does this leave us?

Last week I sent a letter to the parish leaders of the Diocese with a list of “common sense” precautions to be taken in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak. In that letter I informed them that I would be issuing further directives and guidelines as deemed necessary. With the progression of the virus outbreak and the many cancellations of events and Governor Evers’ declaration of a Public Health Emergency Due to COVID-19 I am issuing the following statement.

EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY AND UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE:

1. I am Dispensing from the Sunday Obligation to attend Mass for anyone, who for whatever reason is afraid they might contract COVID-19. I strongly encourage our elderly, very young, and anyone with a compromised immune system to accept this dispensation. For those who elect not to attend Mass, I suggest you gather as family and watch Mass on television, pray the rosary, read and reflect on readings of the day, or perform some other act of prayer or worship.
2. Any parish that has not already done so is to discontinue offering the Precious Blood. We know that although the reception of the Holy Eucharist under both the Body and Blood is a fuller sign, Christ is fully present in just the Body or just the Blood. To those who suffer from celiac disease or a gluten allergy, I hope your parish offers a low gluten host. If not, I encourage you to open yourself to making a “Spiritual” Communion.
3. For those who receive the Body of Christ on the tongue, out of Christian Charity for the sake of others, I ask you, for the time being, please refrain from this. Even though your own personal spirituality may be inclined to receive on the tongue, please, out of concern for the possible spread of the virus to others, receive in the hand.
4. Contact between Mass participants is to be limited. This includes refraining from holding hands when reciting the “Our Father”, shaking hands at the sign of peace, and even greeting parishioners as they enter and leave church. For the sign of peace and greetings, simply nod your head as you verbally express your greeting peace, hello or goodbye, and instruct others to do the same.
5. All Holy Water fonts should be emptied at this time.

Besides these directives, we need to continue the good hygiene practices by covering our mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing and washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If available, have alcohol-based hand sanitizers available in parish offices, churches, schools, and other parish buildings. All ministers of Holy Communion should sanitize their hands both before and after distributing Communion. Also have hand sanitizer conveniently available for all parishioners to use.

IF YOU ARE NOT FEELING WELL OR ARE RUNNING A FEVER, PLEASE STAY HOME. WE DO NOT WANT TO MAKE ANYONE ELSE SICK.

There is a lot of good information on the Diocese of Superior Website of what to do during an influenza outbreak. Although Covid-19 is not the same as the Influenza Virus, the basic common sense advice about influenza does pertain to the coronavirus prevention (except for the part about getting a vaccination). To access this information, go to the Diocese of Superior Home Page and click on the "LINK" to the Diocesan Guidelines for Influenza and Liturgy.

As the coronavirus situation warrants, further directives will be issued either by me directly or through one of the Diocesan Offices.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to let me, Deb Lieberg or Paul Birch know.

Let us all pray for those who are affected by the coronavirus and the medical professionals who care for them.

I pray for good health and a blessed Lent for all. May God shower you and those you serve with his love and peace. God Bless.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Most Rev. James P. Powers".

Most Rev. James P. Powers
Bishop, Diocese of Superior