



DIOCESE OF GAYLORD

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March 4, 2020

Dear Priests and Pastoral Administrators:

We continue to monitor with concern the questions that are arising about the spread of Coronavirus/COVID-19. As a matter of prudence, the following temporary practices are to be implemented at all liturgies in the parishes, schools, and institutions within the Diocese of Gaylord effective immediately.

- Priests, Deacons, Altar Servers, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must wash their hands before Mass begins. An alcohol-based anti-bacterial solution should also be used before and after distributing Holy Communion. (Discern how to do this to best maintain the reverence of the Mass.)
- Ensure all vessels used at Mass, once purified, are thoroughly and appropriately washed and rinsed after each usage.

During all Masses and liturgies: The clergy and faithful should

- Refrain from physical contact during the Sign of Peace and in other instances such as greetings before Mass. (Note: The Sign of Peace can be exchanged without physical contact.)
- Refrain from distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful via the chalice (Precious Blood). Please consider options for any parishioners with celiac disease or gluten sensitivity.
- Encourage the reception of Holy Communion (the Body of Christ) reverently *in open hands* for the time being, given the frequency of direct contact with saliva in the distribution of Holy Communion on the tongue.
- Refrain from holding hands during the Lord's Prayer.
- Drain and sanitize Holy Water fonts, and refrain from using them during this time.
- Assure the faithful that if they are sick, are experiencing symptoms of sickness, or have underlying health issues that make them particularly vulnerable to the effects of the COVID-19 virus, *they are not obliged to attend Mass*, and for those that are sick, out of charity, they ought not to attend. They are encouraged to watch the Diocese's televised Mass on Sundays at 8:00 a.m. on Fox Local 32 and/or to make a spiritual communion. (cf. CCC, #2181)
- Consider making alcohol-based anti-bacterial solution or wipes available for parishioners who come to our churches.

Please also consider making parish or bulletin announcements encouraging best health practices.

These practices are in effect for the time being. We are monitoring the situation and will provide additional updates and guidelines accordingly. Please join in praying for all those who are sick. Whenever possible, add a General Intercession at Mass for those affected by the coronavirus and other communicable diseases.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Steven J Raica
Bishop of Gaylord