Pastoral Directives regarding coronavirus and the flu season

Bishop John B. Brungardt
Catholic Diocese of Dodge City
March 9, 2020

“Everyone in the crowd sought to touch [Jesus] because power came forth from Him and healed them all.”

-- Luke 6:19

What is our response to the coronavirus? What preventative steps should we take to lessen the spread of coronavirus, influenza, and other illnesses during the celebration of the Eucharist?

After much consulting and prayer, my pastoral judgement:

As the coronavirus situation unfolds, and more cases are reported in Kansas, I have consulted and prayerfully decided on these updated directives:

Until further notice, I have dispensed the faithful of the Catholic Diocese of Dodge City from the obligation to attend Sunday Holy Mass. Despite the suspension of the obligation to attend Sunday Holy Mass, all regularly scheduled Holy Masses will remain open to the public for those who wish to attend.

Please keep the following in mind:

- Please do not celebrate Holy Mass if you are feeling sick or have compromised health.
- The exchange of the Sign of Peace is temporarily suspended. Please avoid physical contact before, during, and after Holy Mass.
- We are temporarily suspending the distribution of the Precious Blood of Christ to the faithful. Priests, please consider options for those with celiac disease or sensitivities.
- We are temporarily removing the holy water from the hand fonts.

Let us trust our Divine Physician, Jesus Christ, to assist us in this difficult time.

The following prayer is from Pope Francis:

O Mary, you always shine on our path as a sign of salvation and of hope. We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick, who at the cross took part in Jesus’ pain, keeping your faith firm. You, Salvation of the Roman People, know what we need, and we are sure you will provide so that, as in Cana of Galilee, we may return to joy and to feasting after this time of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love, to conform to the will of the Father and to do as we are told by Jesus, who has taken upon himself our sufferings and carried our sorrows to lead us, through the cross, to the joy of the resurrection. Amen.

UPDATE

Coronavirus Update from Bishop Brungardt
March 13, 2020:

As the coronavirus situation unfolds, and more cases are reported in Kansas, I have consulted and prayerfully decided on these updated directives:

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I review these fundamentals that always apply:

- all priests, deacons, extraordinary ministers of communion, and altar servers are to practice good hygiene, washing their hands before Mass begins, or even using an alcohol based anti-bacterial solution, especially those who distribute Holy Communion.
- any priest who is sick is to find a substitute, or if a substitute is not available, to have Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest in his parish.
- the faithful who are sick are to be assured that they are not obligated to celebrate Holy Mass, and even due to charity, they ought not to attend.

I have decided, for the time being, beginning no later than March 9, 2020:

- to suspend the exchange of the sign of peace; to refrain from other hand-to-hand contact during Holy Mass.
- to suspend the distribution of the Precious Blood of Christ to the faithful. Priests, please consider options for those with celiac disease or sensitivities.

This decision will be reviewed as the coronavirus situation unfolds.
Please hold each other in prayer, especially those who are ill. This crisis may be an opportunity for a more profound pastoral outreach to the sick, by individuals, families, and parishes. Below are sample petitions to use at Holy Mass and other times.

Let us unite in this time of need. Let us respond as Jesus: “Love one another as I love you” (John 15:12).

Sample Prayers of the Faithful (from the USCCB):

- For those who are suffering in the current outbreak of sickness that they might be healed, and for the happy repose of all who have died from this sickness in recent weeks; let us pray to the Lord.
- For scientists, health professionals, public officials, and all who are serving the common good in this difficult and uncertain time, that they will be filled with wisdom and understanding; let us pray to the Lord.
- That in times of illness our merciful and loving Father will strengthen our faith and trust in his goodness and divine providence; let us pray to the Lord.
- That our compassionate Father would touch all affected by the current outbreak with healing and peace; let us pray to the Lord.

For more information from our public health authorities: