



## Memorandum

*Cathedral Square Plaza*

OFFICE OF THE DIOCESAN ADMINISTRATOR

**To: Priests**

**From: Reverend Donald P. Oleksiak** *DPO*

**Date: 17 March 2020**

**Re: Coronavirus update**

As you know, the decision to suspend public celebrations of Mass/Liturgies throughout the Diocese of Cleveland has been made. Please find below specific guidance on how best to proceed with celebrating the sacraments and other answers to questions you may have during this unprecedented health crisis. We each must do our part to slow down this epidemic and protect the common good for the people of God entrusted to our care. Please use your own discretion regarding the reduction of hours or closing of parish offices. If you contract the virus please call your doctor immediately, quarantine yourself, follow health care directives and inform the diocese

### **Keeping Churches Open for Personal Devotion**

Our churches may remain open ONLY if you have taken necessary precautions to perform routine maintenance and have the necessary staff to sanitize all hard surfaces and hymnals in the church, the vestibules, doorknobs, and bathrooms at the end of each day that the church is open (this applies to Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration Chapels as well). The following are some additional suggestions to keep your church a safe place during this health crisis:

- Parishioners should make every effort to observe the highest standards of hygiene. That means not touching your face, wiping your nose or cough while in church.
- Remove items that are in common areas and are regularly touched.
- Remove hymnals or music books from the pews.
- Remove paper from the pews (comment cards, registration cards).

### **Spiritual Communion and Televised Masses**

Televised or live-streamed online Mass provides daily opportunity for the faithful to remain connected to the Eucharist during this difficult time. Please share with your people all opportunities to experience the Mass by way of live-streaming, EWTN, or other opportunities to share in the liturgy online in these next few weeks. Please understand for those who are using technology to record/livestream Mass you are not to have the faithful present. These recorded/livestream Masses are to be private celebrations without the faithful.

### **Baptism**

All parishes in the Diocese of Cleveland are asked to observe some temporary practical norms concerning the Sacrament of Baptism. At this time, baptisms are still possible based on *pastoral urgency*. However, in order to limit the potential spread of the virus to a vulnerable

population, you may only celebrate small, private family baptisms. There are to be no "immersion" baptisms. Use fresh water that has been blessed for the Baptism, pour the water from a pitcher (not your hands) into another receptacle, and immediately drain the water afterwards. Family members who are especially vulnerable are requested to stay home.

### **Confession**

- During this health crisis we need to exercise caution using every option to contain the contagion. Therefore, confessions are limited to being in danger of death. We are not able to provide confession via technology. Please call your parish in the case of an emergency and danger of death.

### **Confirmations**

All confirmation dates scheduled before Easter Sunday are postponed indefinitely and will be re-scheduled once clearance is given. If the confirmation was to be celebrated by the pastor, it can be re-scheduled at the parish. If it was to be celebrated by one of the bishops or by Abbott Hoover, you will need to reschedule it with Ann Marie Perkins in the Diocesan Offices.

### **Weddings**

Every effort should be made to reschedule weddings during this crisis if possible. If a civil license is available, a wedding can be celebrated with immediate family members only, keeping in mind the maximum number persons in attendance according to government directives.

### **Funerals**

If at all possible we recommended that you schedule a memorial Mass at a time when the current restrictions are lifted. The Rite of Committal may be celebrated at the cemetery with immediate family members only, keeping in mind the call for social distancing. If a funeral Mass is celebrated, the attendees are limited to immediate family members only. We encourage you to have the family make note in the published obituary that the funeral Mass and burial are private family only events. Please keep in mind the maximum number of persons in attendance according to government directives.

### **Ministering the Sacraments to a non-coronavirus-infected patient**

#### **Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound**

We urge you to use extreme caution, and only to do so when absolutely necessary (or based on pastoral urgency). If you are a high-risk priest or deacon, you are instructed to refrain from taking communion to the sick. All other clergy should use extreme caution to protect themselves from the contagion. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are not permitted to take Holy Communion to the sick during this health crisis for their good and the good of their families.

- If the visit is in a hospital environment, contact the facility before you visit, and follow the hospital directives regarding personal care (washing hands, etc.).
- Most nursing facilities are under quarantine. Please contact the nursing home staff for directives of attending to the sick and dying. If the communicant is in a nursing facility, avoid visiting to limit potential hazards to the most vulnerable population.
- If the visit is to someone's home:
  - ✓ Wash hands or use a hand sanitizer once you enter the home
  - ✓ Avoid any physical contact with the person or family during the visit
  - ✓ Use a hand sanitizer again before distributing Communion
  - ✓ If the communicant usually receives Communion on the tongue, strongly encourage him or her, for your safety as well as theirs, to receive Communion in the hand
  - ✓ Wash or sanitize your hands after the visit

- Maintain social distance (six feet) from everyone in the room, except the patient
- Do not offer comfort with any physical contact

### **Anointing of the Sick**

If the sacrament is celebrated in a health care facility, follow the protocols and protective guidelines of the facility

- Maintain social distance with everyone in the room so as to offer comfort without making physical contact.
- Wash or sanitize your hands once you enter the room.
- The anointing may be done with a cotton-tipped swab or a cotton ball which should be burned or buried after use.
- If Holy Communion is given, it is to be distributed in the hand.
- Sanitize your hands after the visit.

### **Keeping Contact With those who are Homebound, Sick or Infirm and all your parishioners:**

Here are some thoughts about what you can do to help your parishioners feel cared for and connected during this difficult and perplexing time.

- Expand outreach by making phone calls to homebound parishioners and local nursing home residents and assure them of your prayers, thoughts and best wishes
- Offer to pray with people over the phone.
- Organize individuals to go grocery shopping for others who must stay home. You can always leave groceries at the doorsteps for those most vulnerable but also in need of basic necessities and food.
- Our homeless neighbors will be encountering greater hunger as local restaurants, food pantries and catering companies cut back. Encourage your parishioners to donate to local foodbanks or St. Vincent DePaul society and to continue to be generous to the church so that we can care for those in greatest need.
- Think about video streaming messages, homilies or prayers for others and utilize Facebook, Twitter and other social media means to share these with your parishioners.

### **Ministering the Sacraments to a confirmed COVID-19 patient**

#### **Restrictions for who can fulfill this ministry:**

- No priest in the high risk group or those over 60 years old.
- No priest with chronic illnesses, e.g. heart issues, diabetes, Crohn's, cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, COPD.
- These restrictions are in place following the healthcare guidance that indicates younger, healthier individuals are at a much diminished risk of contracting a serious case of coronavirus.

#### **Anointing of the Sick - coronavirus infected person:**

- If the anointing is performed in a hospital or healthcare facility, the guidelines for protective measures, including garments, prevail.
- If the anointing is not in a hospital or healthcare facility: if available, latex gloves should be worn unless the patient or priest/deacon has an allergic sensitivity to latex. Additionally, if available, protective eye wear should be worn.
- The anointing may be done with a cotton-tipped swab or a cotton ball which is to be burned or buried after use.
- If the priest uses his gloved hand, the glove is to be burned or buried after the visit.
- If Holy Communion is given, it is to be distributed in the hand.

- Maintain social distance (six feet) from everyone in the room, except the patient.
- Do not offer comfort with any physical contact.

#### **Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound – non-coronavirus infected person:**

- During this health crisis, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are not permitted to take communion to the sick for their good and the good of the infirmed.
- If this is performed in a hospital or healthcare facility, the guidelines for protective measures, including garments, prevail.
- If this is not in a hospital or healthcare facility: if available, latex gloves should be worn unless the patient or priest/deacon has an allergic sensitivity to latex. Additionally, if available, protective eye wear should be worn.
- If the visit is to someone's home:
  - ✓ Wash hands or use a hand sanitizer once you enter the home
  - ✓ Avoid any physical contact with the person or family during the visit
  - ✓ Use a hand sanitizer again before distributing Communion
  - ✓ If the communicant usually receives Communion on the tongue, strongly encourage him or her, for your safety as well as theirs, to receive Communion in the hand
  - ✓ Wash or sanitize your hands after the visit
- Maintain social distance (six feet) from everyone in the room, except the patient
- Do not offer comfort with any physical contact

#### **Regarding Religious Education, RCIA, and All Other Ministry Groups**

All classes, sessions and **meetings** are to be cancelled regardless of the number of attendees/participants.

#### **Remember to Pray**

Catholics have always joined together in prayer during times of crisis throughout the ages. We have ministered to the sick, attended to the dying and buried the dead. May this unprecedented time in our history be a time we remember who we are and whose we are – disciples of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. May we continue to demonstrate love of God and of our neighbor. In addition, may we remember to pray for everyone involved as we weather the storm.

As Pope Francis reminds us, we should be reaching out to our communities and praying in solidarity with the Church around the world. He offered this prayer to Mary, mother of Jesus: *O Mary, you always shine on our path as a sign of salvation and 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 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.*