

Special Announcement from the Pastor

We are all watching with great concern the spread of the Coronavirus, known as COVID-19, throughout the world. This virus first appeared in January in Wuhan China, and over the course of the last few months, it has spread all over the world. The World Health Organization has declared that COVID-19 is a global pandemic, and it should be taken seriously. As of this writing, several cases have been found in Ohio, and Governor DeWine has issued an executive order banning large gatherings over 100 people. The Governor issued this order to try and create social distancing in order to mitigate the spread of the virus, in order to protect people, especially those most at risk, those who are over 65 years of age or those with underlying health conditions. Included in the Governor's order was a closure of all schools in Ohio for three weeks.

The Bishops of Ohio in collaboration with each other have determined a course of action, for the common good, and for the physical and spiritual health of the People of God. Our Archbishop has sent a letter to the priests of the Archdiocese outlining that course of action. Archbishop Schnurr in his directive states the following:

- The Catholic Faithful of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati are dispensed from their Sunday Mass obligation through the weekend of March 28-29.
- Masses may be celebrated as currently scheduled with the following restrictions
 - o No holding hands during the Our Father
 - o Suspension of the exchange of the sign of peace
 - o No reception of Holy Communion from the Chalice
 - o No reception of Holy Communion on the tongue
- Holy Water fonts will be drained
- Unconsecrated bread and wine for Mass are to be kept out of public areas, and not be part of an offertory procession.

Current general precautions should continue to be followed.

- Anyone who is sick, or experiencing any symptoms of any kind of sickness, or are at risk are strongly encouraged to not attend Mass, and out of charity for their brothers and sisters in Christ, should remain home.
- Priests, deacons, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should practice good hygiene, and wash hands before Mass, and discreetly use hand sanitizer before and after distributing Communion if possible (hand sanitizer has very rapidly disappeared from store shelves).
- All vessels used for Holy Communion should be washed after Mass with hot, soapy water (this has been our practice anyway).

In addition, the Archbishop adds the following that will effect our Pastoral Region

- Non-Sacramental parish events or gatherings (that is any gatherings where a Sacrament is not conferred such as Mass or Confessions) is to be canceled. This will

include anything outside of Mass, Confessions, Baptism, or some other conferral of a Sacrament, including but not necessarily limited to:

- Book Club
- 40 Hour Food Fast
- Religious Education Programs
- Youth Group
- Women's Group
- Stations of the Cross
- Retreats
- The Simple Soup Supper

In addition to what the Archbishop has sent to us, I also ask the following:

- Parishioners try to refrain from stopping by the parish office unannounced. We want to protect all of us, parishioners, and staff. Please call first before you stop by.
- I ask that the People of parishes continue to pray the Most Holy Rosary, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, The Way of the Cross, make Novenas, and other devotions at home for the specific intention of God's protection against pestilence. Prayer is powerful, even if we have to be socially isolated in a time of pandemic.
- If you are experiencing symptoms, please call and follow the directions of your health care providers, and if its critical, call 911.
- There is no cause for panic.

I also must remind all our parishioners that even though this health crisis is going on around us, and we are responding in ways meant to minimize the spread of the virus, our bills and expenses are not suspended. I encourage you, even if you choose to not attend Mass, or even in the event of a disruption of public celebration of Mass should that happen at some point down the road, our parishes will still need to pay our bills. Please consider sending your Sunday offering to the parish by mail, or even better, consider electronic giving, so that we can continue to keep our bills paid.

Take Good Care,
Fr. Bryan T. Reif
Pastor