



11 March 2020

**COVID-19 Coronavirus
Update 3 for Priests, Parishes & Staff**

As a followup to our March 6th communication, we continue to monitor the situation regarding active cases of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in the Archdiocese of Edmonton. With the number of cases rising in Alberta, and the declaration of a pandemic by the World Health Organization, the levels of anxiety and fear have increased for many parishioners. To date, the response has varied at individual parishes. Although the risk of infection remains low in Alberta, we believe it is best to act from an abundance of caution and implement the same infection prevention measures at *all places where Mass is celebrated*.

Therefore at this time, Archbishop Smith is requesting that all parishes implement the following measures on a temporary basis:

- At the Sign of Peace, refrain from shaking hands – a simple bow, nod, or “Peace be with you” to your neighbour is appropriate.
- All holy water fonts are to remain empty.
- The Precious Blood is not to be distributed from the chalice.

Experts in public health have advised that there is *no* greater risk of infection in receiving the host on the tongue than there is in receiving in the hand. Communicants are free to receive either way. However, for people’s greater peace of mind, priests should offer a dedicated line for communicants who prefer to receive on the tongue.

Those who distribute communion must continue to wash their hands thoroughly or use hand sanitizer before and after the distribution of Communion.

Since the COVID-19 coronavirus can be picked up by touching a surface that an infected person has touched – such as a pew or hymnal – everyone should wash their hands thoroughly before and after Mass.

As previously communicated, we offer the following reminders to help reduce exposure to this or any virus and to protect your health:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Sneeze and cough into your sleeve
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Avoid contact with people who are sick
- Stay home if you have any signs of illness, especially a fever and cough.
- If you are returning from outside of Canada and feel well, you should closely monitor your health for 14 days.

If you are returning from an affected area, or if you start experiencing a fever or cough, even if it is mild, please self-isolate yourself immediately and call Health Link 811. This includes any of our priests and staff who may be returning from vacations or studies abroad.

- Those who stay at home are encouraged to pray and reflect on the Sunday readings if they are well enough. They can also pray along with the televised Sunday Mass, which is broadcast on Salt+Light TV and streamed on the Internet at saltandlighttv.org at 9 a.m. MT, 1 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. each Sunday.
- Pastoral care team members who bring the Blessed Sacrament to shut-ins should not attend any homes where influenza or COVID-19 is known or suspected to be present. As is usual practice, those visiting health care facilities or nursing homes should continue to follow the infection prevention protocols at each institution.

Be assured that we will continue to work with provincial health officials and keep you updated as appropriate. Provincial government updates are posted twice daily at alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Father Adam Lech at the Chancery Office.

Suggested Pulpit/Bulletin Announcement

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Preventive Measures in Place

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- At the Sign of Peace, refrain from shaking hands – a simple bow, nod, or “Peace be with you” to your neighbour is appropriate.
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Experts in public health have advised that there is *no* greater risk of infection in receiving the host on the tongue than there is in receiving in the hand. Communicants are free to receive either way. However, for people’s greater peace of mind, priests will offer a dedicated line for communicants who prefer to receive on the tongue.

Please also continue to practice healthy hygiene – wash your hands with soap or use hand sanitizer regularly, remain home if you are sick, sneeze/cough into your sleeve, and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Let us continue to care for ourselves and one another as we pray for all those affected worldwide by COVID-19.



The Catholic
Archdiocese
of **Edmonton**