



The Episcopal Diocese of Dallas

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The Right Rev. Dr. George R. Sumner, Bishop

March 3, 2020

Pastoral Directive – Coronavirus
Second Tuesday in Lent, 2020

I am writing this pastoral directive in my capacity as pastor, teacher, and overseer of the clergy and people of the Diocese of Dallas as a consequence of the spread of the coronavirus. It is my hope that the following changes and precautions will both help our people remain well and reduce anxiety over the spread of the coronavirus. Please know that this directive comes with my prayers for you and your congregation, prayers which I assure you will continue until the current situation improves.

Liturgical Changes Effective Immediately

- Holy Communion is only to be given in one kind, the Bread. Only the celebrant may receive the wine.
- There is to be no physical touching – hugs, handshakes, fist bumps, etc. – during the Peace. The Peace may be exchanged verbally or with a head nod, for example.

Additional Requirements

- Clergy must stay home from work or worship if they have any respiratory symptom not explained by allergies or explicitly diagnosed by a physician. Please notify me or the Canon to the Ordinary if you are ill.
- The Rector or Vicar will instruct the people to stay home from worship if they have any respiratory symptom not explained by allergies or explicitly diagnosed by a physician.
- The Rector or Vicar will instruct elderly or other high-risk parishioners that they may stay home from public worship and that the priest or LEV will visit the person's home.
- All clergy and servers, including ushers, greeters and altar guild, will wash their hands before and after public worship, ideally for 20 seconds. Those distributing communion will sanitize their hands with alcohol-based sanitizer prior to doing so.
- You will provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer readily available, preferable in the pews.
- You will ensure that frequently touched areas of your facilities, such as door handles, altar rails, and pews; are appropriately sanitized after use.
- Clergy should avoid liturgical practices that involves physical touching.
- Remove holy water for individual blessings from fonts and stoups.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is the purpose of this directive?

A. We are not seeking to curtail our worship of God, but rather to see to that it can be offered in a way that protects the vulnerable.

Q. Are you medically qualified to write such a directive?

A. No. That is why we sought expert medical and public health advice.

Q. Why is avoiding physical contact at the Peace important?

A. Shaking hands is an effective way to transmit the virus. This is why sanitizing our hands is so important.

Q. Why is withholding the cup advisable?

A. While there is no past evidence of the cup as a means of infection for other disease, novel corona is highly contagious.

Q. If I only receive the consecrated bread, have I really taken communion?

A. Yes, according to the doctrine of concomitance each element conveys the full presence of Christ.

Q. What if I'd prefer a blessing rather than receiving the bread?

A. This is always an option for everyone.

Peace,

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The Rt. Rev. Dr. George R. Sumner
Bishop, Diocese of Dallas

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