

Message from March 10, 2020

## Regarding Extended Pastoral Care in Our Parish

In addition to the directive issued by Bishop Gainer on March 2, 2020 (reprinted below for your convenience), Bishop Gainer has made the following decisions in prudence and out of pastoral care for the faithful throughout the Diocese of Harrisburg.

1. Parishes and institutions are directed to suspend the use of individual holy water fonts until further notice. The faithful should have access to holy water for home and personal use. Please make every provision for holy water to be available and for the faithful to properly carry it with them.
2. Both the recipient and the distributor of Holy Communion should be asked to exercise great care to avoid any undue contact during the distribution of Holy Communion. While every indication points to a preferred method of reception of Holy Communion *at this time* as "in the hand" (note, this not a theological but practical recommendation), no one is to be forbidden the opportunity to receive Holy Communion on the tongue. Proper instruction for the careful and reverent reception of Holy Communion is an ordinary pastoral duty and especially during this time of concern.
3. Priests and deacons should exercise special care and reverence when preparing the Holy Eucharist for distribution into separate vessels. In many cases, it is not necessary to handle the Sacred Species but to reverently and carefully transport the Sacred Host from one vessel to another by a pouring action. Anxiety is heightened at this time and any precautions we can take will not only help to prevent the spread of illness but also to assuage the concerns of the many who faithfully attend Holy Mass.

Message from March 2, 2020

At the direction of Bishop Gainer, all parishes and institutions are instructed to suspend the distribution of the Precious Blood to the faithful by way of the Chalice and to omit the exchange of peace. Should a parish practice a custom of the assembly/ministers holding hands during the celebration of Mass, that is to be suspended as well.

This decision has been made out of prudence due to the serious nature of the influenza virus this season and because of the public concerns about the coronavirus. This temporary suspension will be lifted when indications are given by medical professionals that the high risk has passed.

Regarding the exchange of peace, the priest celebrant continues to say, "The peace of the Lord be with you always," with the Assembly responding. The invitation to exchange peace is omitted (in accord with #128 Ordo Missae), and the Communion Rite continues with the fraction rite and commingling.

Great care should be taken by Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to ensure that their hands are properly washed before and after Mass. Please ensure that those who take Holy Communion to the Sick and to hospitals and other institutions are well-informed about properly washing their hands. It is a fitting time to attend to the washing of doorknobs and pews and any other places of high contact within churches, schools, and offices. These are good practices in every flu season, but especially pertinent given the great concern surrounding us today.

Please be sure to explain to your parish and institution that this is a temporary measure taken out of an abundance of caution for their well-being as well as an act of charity toward their fellow parishioners. Please place an announcement in the bulletins and other forms of media as we begin this practice.

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