



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCKHAMPTON

Prot: 20113:MMsp_1106

4 March 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Re: National Advice on Liturgical Implications In Light of Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Over these past few weeks, we have all been monitoring the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and its impact upon communities here and overseas. With the spreading of the virus in Australia I ask that the following safe practices be adopted when liturgy is conducted within this Diocese, to minimise the risk of passing on the virus.

The scientists and health professionals are recommending scrupulous hand washing and ensuring there is no contact with bodily fluids, including saliva.

The following guidelines are effective immediately and are based on today's advice from the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference which are believed to be proportionate to the current understanding of the coronavirus and the risks outlined by health authorities:

- Individuals should consider their own health, including any potential to infect others with a contagious disease, before attending a public liturgical celebration.
- Holy Water should be temporarily removed from stoups at the doors of churches to reduce the possibility of transmission of the virus. Holy Water should continue to be available for people to take home.
- Parishes and other settings where liturgies are celebrated should make alcohol-based gels or rubs (or like products) available near entrances. Similar provisions should be considered for settings used for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- When exchanging the Sign of Peace, individuals should avoid shaking hands but say "Peace be with you" and offer a smile, wave, nod or bow.
- All Ministers of Holy Communion should take particular care to wash their hands before and after distributing. Appropriate means should be made available.
- Parishes should cease distributing Holy Communion from the Chalice until further notice. The faithful should be reminded that Christ is fully present under either species.
- The coronavirus is easily spread through saliva. In celebrations of the Ordinary Form of the Latin Rite, it is therefore recommended that the Body of Christ only be administered in the hand because of the high risk of transmission if people continue to receive on the tongue. Ministers should seek to avoid contact with the communicant's hands.
- The faithful who are too unwell to attend Sunday Mass – whether due to coronavirus or some other condition – or are at particular risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus can honour their Sunday obligation by participating in a time of prayer within the home, reading the Scriptures or watching Mass on television or online. Within our Diocese the 9.30am Sunday Mass from St Joseph's Cathedral can be viewed online at:
<https://www.youtube.com/user/StJosephsCathRton>

Bishop Michael McCarthy

- All involved in other parish ministries, particularly to the sick and elderly, refrain from undertaking ministry if they feel unwell or believe they could have been exposed to the virus. As per previous advice hand washing should be undertaken before and after and individuals should follow the advice and practices of the local health authority.
- Collectors and those who handle and count money may consider wearing gloves, in addition to hand washing, while the virus is present in the community.
- If you have recently travelled to Italy, Iran, South Korea or China in the last 14 days and know you have exposed to the Virus, it is best to self-quarantine and stay at home.
- To keep up to date with the recommendations of Queensland Department of Health; please visit the web site;
<http://conditions.health.qld.gov.au/HealthCondition/condition/14/217/838/novel-coronavirus>

I ask for your assistance in implementing these guidelines and ensuring it is clearly communicated in our communities.

You can access the full ACBC statement here - <https://www.catholic.org.au/acbc-media/media-centre/media-releases-new/2258-national-liturgical-advice-on-coronavirus-covid-19/file>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael McCarthy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Rev Michael McCarthy
Bishop of Rockhampton