



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIocese of
SPRINGFIELD-CAPE GIRARDEAU

Office of the Bishop

March 4, 2020
Feast of St. Casimir

Dear Priests, Deacons and Parishioners,

As the coronavirus becomes more prevalent in the nation's headlines, we are expecting questions to arise regarding the preparedness of our parishes in dealing with the outbreak. While there is no cause for panic, it is good to be proactive and take precautionary measures.

On a practical level, I ask that the following precautions be implemented in order to protect parishioners from the spread of illness when they gather for Holy Mass:

- Sanitize all sacred vessels before and after all Masses (with soap and hot water), because germs may survive on surfaces up to 24 or more hours.
- Suspend the exchange of the sign of peace.
- Suspend holding hands at the Our Father (for those who do so).
- Suspend the distribution of Holy Communion via the chalice.
- Sanitize holy water fonts weekly or discontinue the use of holy water for the meantime.
- Encourage good hygiene including alcohol – based hand sanitizer lotion in restrooms and public areas, and proper cough – and – sneeze etiquette. It is especially important for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to implement these measures.
- Visit the website of your local or state health department for updates.

On a pastoral level, I ask the following practices:

- Encourage the sick to stay at home.
- Bring Holy Communion to the sick at their place of residence
- Identify those who are vulnerable, i.e., the elderly or disabled and check on them

You will also find attached a protocol for our Catholic schools and Parish Schools of Religion programs. With the assurance of my prayers for your health and well-being and united with Our Lady at the foot of the Cross, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Edward M. Rice
Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau

cc: Catholic School Principals
Enclosure

Diocese of Springfield Cape-Girardeau Public Health Concerns with regard to the Coronavirus

Catholic School and Parish School of Religion Directives

The Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau has issued the following directives for Catholic schools and Parish School of Religion (PSR) programs, as precautionary measures, in dealing with the potential for an outbreak of the coronavirus:

- Our Catholic Schools and PSR programs will follow the decision of their local city or area public schools in their decision to close or suspend their school or PSR operations.
- We would ask teachers to prepare lesson plans for at least two weeks in advance, so teachers would be able to give direction to their students, in the event school would be suspended for this period of time.
- Our schools/principals need to develop communication plans, so that schools will be able to continually communicate with parents during a potential long-term closing of a school. This will facilitate the continuance of students' educational programs off-site.
- In the event of a suspected case of coronavirus, the health department of the city or county should be contacted immediately for further instructions.
- Visit the website of your local or state health department for updates.

March 4, 2020