



Diocese of Brownsville

Catholic Pastoral Center

Notice on Virus and Flu Precautions

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

As we continue to care for our parish and school communities, it is prudent to take precautionary measures to protect public health. As the virus and flu season is particularly virulent at this time, Bishop Daniel E. Flores is directing the implementation of the following temporary modifications throughout the diocese as soon as possible:

- Discontinuing the distribution of the Precious Blood at Mass (please assure anyone concerned that the fullness of the Eucharist is present in the Eucharistic Host).
- Forgoing the holding of hands at the Lord's Prayer.
- A bow of the head for the Sign of Peace in place of shaking hands.
- Offering hand sanitizer stations at church and school entrances.
- Working with altar teams and parish volunteers to sanitize pews and hymnals.
- The removal of holy water from stoops at church doors (this does not apply to circulating holy water fonts with filters and running water).

We also ask parishes and schools to remind parishioners and students of these best practices:

- Assure the faithful that if they are sick or are experiencing symptoms of sickness they are not obliged to attend Mass, and even that out of charity they should not attend.
- Students who are ill should stay home from school or catechetical/religious education classes.
- Teachers, Catechists, and Administrators should send ill students home.
- Liturgical ministers, especially Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, should maintain clean/sanitized hands.
 - Wash hands before Mass or use a personal bottle of alcohol-based hand sanitizer while in the pew before serving, ensuring the sanitizer is entirely dry before serving.
 - Wash liturgical vessels with mild detergent and hot water after each liturgy, which will 1) help to protect the finish by removing oil from hands, and 2) work to remove pathogens that may be on the vessel from its use in the liturgy.

These measures are to remain in effect until withdrawn by the Bishop. We will continue to monitor public health advisories. If and when it becomes necessary we will take other preventative steps with regard to the celebration of the liturgy in our churches.

Thank you for taking this time of heightened awareness of viruses seriously. Together, our efforts can certainly keep our parishes healthy but also join the wider community in protecting the common good of all people.