

## RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS: Policy Step Two – March 9, 2020

Last week, we were reminded about the usual ways to prevent viral infections like the flu and COVID-19:

- ✓ Washing your hands frequently with soap and water (or an alcohol-based gel)
- ✓ Avoiding close contact with those who are sick (and if you're sick, seek care and stay away from others; it is good to remember that illness dispenses from the Sunday obligation to attend Mass)
- ✓ Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- ✓ Covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze; use a tissue and throw it away right away—and wash your hands; if you don't have a tissue, use the crook of your elbow
- ✓ Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces by using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

At the end of last week, in light of the continuing spread of the virus which causes COVID-19, the Iowa Department of Public Health recommended that we stop sharing the Chalice and the Sign of Peace. We shared that information with pastors.

When a new virus comes on the scene, no one is immune, so everyone is at risk. While this virus seems to be very contagious, the good news is that most people (80%) who become ill with it have mild disease. Those who are at highest risk are the elderly and those with chronic illnesses (such as heart and lung disease, and diabetes). Public health interventions can't prevent all infections. Instead, they are intended to keep the total number of infections, and the number of infections at any one time, down. This keeps the healthcare system from getting overwhelmed and buys time for vaccines and medications to be developed. We take these steps in order to care for our community, and especially for those most vulnerable and at risk—not only from the disease itself, but from the social and economic consequences that an outbreak like this causes.

Given that this virus continues to spread across the United States, and that Iowa has its first presumptive positive cases; given that it is very likely that people can be infected but show no or only mild symptoms; and given that our hospitals and clinics are already stressed with caring for those with seasonal influenza, **we have made the decision to move to STEP TWO of our policy.**

These are among the liturgical changes called for (please see the complete policy on our website for further details about what else is called for; <https://www.davenportdiocese.org/flu>):

- Keeping the vessels containing the bread and wine covered until they are placed on the altar.
- No longer offering communion under the form of wine.
- No longer receiving the Host on the tongue.
- In giving communion on the hand, the minister should not touch the communicant; in places where those not receiving communion are blessed instead, the blessing is given without touching them.
- The sign of peace is no longer shared by a handshake or hug. Instead, a simple bow or nod to one another is used. If the parish holds hands at the Our Father, this is also stopped.
- Ministers (including clergy and ministers of hospitality) are asked not to shake hands when they greet parishioners. All ministers, since they will be touching items in common, are to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before and after Mass, and during Mass if needed.
- On Good Friday, the Cross will be venerated by a bow or genuflection, not by touching or kissing.
- The communal celebration of the Anointing of the Sick is not recommended.
- Holy water fonts/stoups (with standing water) are emptied.

The CDC does not recommend face masks for general use. Those who show symptoms of COVID-19 should wear a mask to protect others. Those caring for folks with the illness should also wear them.