



# Diocese of Owensboro

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McRaith Catholic Center

Office of Communications

March 4, 2020

## **Statement Regarding Coronavirus Disease 2019**

Amid concerns of the spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the Diocese of Owensboro would like to take this time to share some information with our priests, parishioners, students, and staff.

The diocese is closely monitoring information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) regarding the spread of this respiratory disease. The diocese has a flu pandemic policy that would be adapted and go into effect if the coronavirus becomes pandemic. This includes adjustments made in terms of liturgy, parishes, schools, and diocesan events.

As of today, March 4, 2020, there are zero confirmed cases in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and more than 100 confirmed cases in the United States. The CDC assessment of March 2, 2020 states, "For the general American public, who are unlikely to be exposed to this virus at this time, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low." As we monitor the situation, if anything changes, priests, parishes, schools, and parents would be notified immediately.

In terms of Mass, Bishop William F. Medley believes it may be prudent to not offer the chalice containing the Precious Blood to the congregation throughout the season of Lent. This will be reevaluated after Lent and further recommendations made. As always during flu season, it is permissible to offer the Sign of Peace without the handshake.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) advises priests, deacons and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to use proper hygiene by "washing hands before Mass begins," and that if anyone is sick or experiencing symptoms of sickness they are "not obliged to attend Mass." Please be looking for a follow-up email from Lauren Johnson, co-coordinator for the Office of Worship, for additional precautions and information regarding the liturgy.

This is a good time to remind individuals, families and schools of everyday preventative good practices to keep from spreading any type of virus:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid close contact with those who are sick.
  - Stay home if you are sick (you should be fever-free for 24 hours before any public contact).
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw away the tissue and wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Clean frequently touched areas/surfaces.

Please keep the situation regarding the coronavirus in prayer. Pray for those affected and impacted worldwide.

The USCCB has provided the following sample petitions to use:

- For those who are suffering in the current outbreak of sickness that they might be healed, and for the happy repose of all who have died from this sickness in recent weeks; let us pray to the Lord.
- For scientists, health professionals, public officials, and all who are serving the common good in this difficult and uncertain time, that they will be filled with wisdom and understanding; let us pray to the Lord.
- That in times of illness our merciful and loving Father will strengthen our faith and trust in his goodness and divine providence; let us pray to the Lord.
- That our compassionate Father would touch all affected by the current outbreak with healing and peace; let us pray to the Lord.

For any additional information regarding Coronavirus Disease 2019, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

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