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MEMORANDUM

Date: February 28, 2020
To: Priests, Deacons, Religious, Principals, Liturgical Ministers, and lay faithful
From: The Most Reverend Oscar A. Solis, D.D.
What: Novel Coronavirus and the Celebration of Liturgy in the Diocese of Salt Lake City

The Novel Coronavirus continues to spread around the world. To date, however, neither the national or state Centers for Disease Control have issued any specific directives for our region. We do not want to create any panic, but we also want to be ready if the need arises, to implement appropriate health precautions. These precautions will probably be very similar to the precautions we implemented some years ago for the H1N1 Flu Virus which follow. **Please do not implement these recommendations until you are notified to do so.** I send them out early, so that pastors, administrators, principals and lay ministers can be prepared to implement them immediately when necessary and be prepared to provide the proper and adequate instruction/catechesis in all parishes and institutions of the Diocese.

If and when the time comes to implement these procedures, please announce the following:

In order to help curb the spread of the Coronavirus, the Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City will be implementing some temporary procedural changes in the liturgy. These cautionary measures are to be implemented immediately with proper and adequate instruction/catechesis in all parishes and institutions of the diocese.

GENERAL HEALTH PRECAUTIONS:

1. Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth after coming in contact with sick persons or possibly contaminated surfaces. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.
2. Cover your coughs and sneezes. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. This helps to prevent those around you from getting sick.
3. Clean your hands. Washing your hands thoroughly (20 seconds at least) with soap and water often will help protect you from germs.
4. Stay home when you are sick. Stay home from work, school, errands, and church when you are sick, and keep sick children at home as well. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
5. Avoid close contact. Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick also.
6. Practice other good health habits. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

7. Make sure facilities are clean: To reduce the transmission of viruses, clean bathrooms more frequently. Disinfect door handles often, even asking ushers or ministers of hospitality to do so before and after the Masses. Toys in play areas should be sanitized after use. Religious Education classrooms should also be sanitized before and after use (i.e. tables, chairs, etc).

SPECIFIC PRECAUTIONS FOR LITURGY:

1. Ministers, including clergy and ministers of hospitality, are asked not to shake hands when they greet parishioners. Also, if the assembly is invited to greet each other at the beginning of the liturgy or to gather after Mass, the same precautions should be taken.

2. In the Diocese of Salt Lake City, the norm for receiving Holy Communion is under both species, but until further notice, the common Cup for Holy Communion should not be offered in the parishes, schools and institutions of the diocese. Only the consecrated Host should be offered.

Provisions should be made for those with Celiac Disease and cannot receive the consecrated Host, i.e. a small cup should be consecrated for their reception of Holy Communion. Celebrants, concelebrants and deacons who officially assist at Mass receive under both forms. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and the lay faithful will not be offered the Precious Blood. There is risk of infection from contact with saliva as well as from handling the cup from person to person.

Please take an adequate amount of time to catechize the faithful about the doctrine of concomitance, which states:

[It is to be acknowledged] that Christ whole and entire and true a sacrament are received under either species alone; and that therefore, as regards the fruit thereof, they, who receive one species alone, are not defrauded of any grace necessary for salvation.¹

3. Communion in the hand is better hygiene in this situation. However, Holy Communion is not to be denied to those who choose to receive on the tongue. If the situation worsens, this will be reviewed.²

4. Because viruses are transmitted by contact, a verbal exchange at the Sign of Peace is appropriate at this time. The priest or deacon may either omit the invitation (“Let us offer one another a Sign of Peace”) or specify a manner of exchange in the invitation (“Let us verbally offer one another a Sign of Peace”). A bow is also an appropriate gesture.

5. Holding hands during the Our Father is to be excluded.

6. Priests, Deacons, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Sacristans, and Ministers of Hospitality (greeters and Ushers) should exercise good hygiene, i.e. washing hands with soap and water before and after the liturgy. In particular, those who distribute Holy Communion (at Mass, to the homebound, at hospitals, or nursing homes) should discreetly use hand sanitizers before and after Communion. This should not become part of the ritual. Boxes of tissues and additional hand sanitizers are to be provided in the gathering spaces, restrooms, kitchens or church entrances for those who wish to use them.

7. An announcement should be made at the beginning of Mass regarding these precautions.

¹ The Council of Trent the Twenty-First Session

² Although the preference in the diocese is for reception on the hand, following the dictum of St. Cyril of Jerusalem (4th Century) “*When you approach, do not advance with open palms and fingers apart, but make your left hand like a throne for your right, which is about to receive the King*” Church norms state that those who choose to receive on the tongue cannot be denied.

8. All those who choose to stay home due to illness are excused from the obligation of attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days. They may participate in the sacred liturgy by reading the Scriptures assigned to that Sunday and meditate on them, viewing a televised Mass, or listening to Mass on Immaculate Heart Radio.

9. The practice of touching a non-communicant for a blessing and the local practice of blessing children after Holy Communion is also to be discontinued.

10. At the recommendation of the Salt Lake Valley Health department, I would ask that all water from holy water fonts be removed at this time to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

If you have a website, please post this information on it. People may feel uneasy about staying away from Mass. Encourage them to do so as an act of charity toward their neighbors. You can tell them that a dispensation is given for those who need one.

Hopefully, the precautions we are taking will help prevent the spread of illness. I will notify parishes when these directives are lifted and we will return to our normal liturgical practices. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.