



## Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama

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Office of the Bishop

March 2, 2020  
Monday in the First Week of Lent

Dear Reverend Fathers, Deacons, and Parish Administrative Staff,

As you have likely heard on national and local media, the Covid-19 coronavirus is a dangerous, contagious respiratory illness that can easily spread from person to person. While the U.S. has experienced minimal coronavirus cases to date, I ask you to exercise the following precautions and protocols to minimize the potential for coronavirus and flu spread:

- Priests, deacons, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are urged to practice good hygiene, washing their hands before Mass begins or even using an alcohol based anti-bacterial solution before and after distributing Holy Communion.
- Please 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 ought not to attend.
- At the discretion of the pastor, suspending the exchange of the sign of peace (or instructing that it be exchanged without physical contact) may be a prudent response.
- In the Diocese of Birmingham: The distribution of Holy Communion from the Chalice is to be suspended until further notice.
- Communion on the hand or on the tongue remains at the discretion of the communicant.
- Permission is granted to any priest in the Diocese to use, on any ferial day in Lent in the Ordinary Form, the Mass "In Any Need – A" (No. 48, Masses for Various Needs and Occasions), to pray against the spread of COVID-19 ("coronavirus"), in accordance with nn. GIRM 354a and 374. The readings of the day should be used, and violet vestments should be worn.

With assurance of prayers for all of you, I remain

Fraternally Yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. Baker, S.T.D.  
Bishop of Birmingham in Alabama

Very Reverend Justin L. Ward  
Vicar for Sacred Liturgy