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ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

March 11, 2020

Dear Priests and Deacons,

Health officials have now declared the coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic. As the virus is present in the Greater St. Louis area, my first request to all of you is that you consider your own health as you look to best serve your flock.

If you are sick or experiencing symptoms, please do not offer Mass, participate in parish activities or visit the sick in residences, hospitals or nursing homes. If you are [symptomatic](#) of COVID-19, **contact your local department of health**. Officials will give you information regarding potential testing and the need to self-quarantine.

If you plan to travel, you are advised to check the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) link for travel guidelines and the latest updates on areas with confirmed cases of COVID-19](#). If you are traveling to an area where the virus is present or are unsure whether or not it is present at your travel destination, please contact your local county's department of health for further instruction.

If you need support, please contact the Vicar for Priests, Father Kenneth Brown at KennethBrown@archstl.org or (314) 792-7550. The Office of Communications and Planning is also standing by to support you in finding the answers you seek. You may contact them at communications@archstl.org or (314) 792-7633.

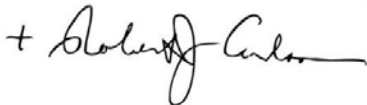
Following discussions with archdiocesan leadership and consultation with the St. Louis Department of Health and the CDC, I am now **mandating** that all parishes within the Archdiocese of St. Louis adhere to the health and safety measures recommended to you last week. I urge you to please address the following with your parishioners at Masses, in your bulletin and on your parish website:

- A parishioner should not come to Mass, church activities or school if they are feeling sick or if their immune system is compromised. It is not a sin to miss Mass when they are sick.
- Remind the elderly, who are among the most vulnerable, that they have the option to participate in the Mass on TV or online via channels such as EWTN, and to request that Holy Communion be brought to their place of residence.
- Sanitize all sacred vessels before and after all Masses. Germs can survive on surfaces for 24 or more hours.

- Suspend the physical exchange of the sign of peace. Use a hand gesture or bow instead. Consider suspending the sign of peace altogether during this time.
- Advise parishioners to keep a distance of three feet from the nearest neighbor when possible.
- Holy Communion distributed by extraordinary ministers will be administered in the hand only. We should strongly recommend that parishioners receive Holy Communion in the hand, however, as this is a celebration of God's love for us and the most important part of our Mass, parishioners who still wish to receive Holy Communion on the tongue should receive from the Mass celebrant only.
- Suspend the distribution of Holy Communion via the chalice.
- No ministers, ordinary or extraordinary, should administer Holy Communion if they have signs of illness.
- All ministers, ordinary and extraordinary, delivering Holy Communion to the elderly, sick or homebound need to be in good health.
- Holy Water fonts should be drained and left empty at this time.
- Encourage the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer which should be placed in highly visible public areas. Remind parishioners of proper cough-and-sneeze etiquette (guidelines are available on the CDC website at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)).
- The latest updates on the coronavirus (COVID-19) as well as all preventative measures can be found on [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).
- The Office of Communications and Planning has created and continues to update a landing page at [archstl.org/coronavirus](https://www.archstl.org/coronavirus) that will support you in all of your conversations with parishioners about this illness.

Thank you for all you do in serving the faithful of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, for your work in helping to reduce the spread of all illnesses, and for conveying this information to your parishioners. I will continue to have you all in my prayers as well as those suffering from illness and those caring for them. I ask for your continued prayers as we lead the archdiocese forward during this challenging time.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Robert J. Carlson
Archbishop of St. Louis