



Catholic Diocese of Evansville

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Diocese acts to prevent spread of Coronavirus

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*Editor's note: The following report will appear in the March 13, 2020, edition of **The Message**.*

Diocese of Evansville staff continues to assess the status of COVID-19, also known as Coronavirus, across our 12 counties. In a follow-up to guidelines related to preventing the spread of the flu provided on Jan. 8 to priests and deacons of the diocese, the Office of Worship issued a letter on March 9 with the following information:

In light of the growing concerns due to the spread of the coronavirus to the state, as well as the continued presence of influenza, and following practices recommended by local health officials, here is our updated position as well as some suggestions/best practices:

- ***Holy Communion from the chalice and the Sign of Peace are to be suspended immediately at all public Masses (both Sunday/holy day and weekday, including school Masses) until further notice.***
 - *While both of these practices are normally encouraged (especially Communion from the chalice) at Mass, the current status of the flu and the coronavirus warrants such an action.*

Best Practices:

- *Respectfully, but repeatedly, remind people (before Mass, in the bulletin, etc.) that if they are feeling ill, they should stay home to avoid spreading the disease (this is good advice year-round).*
- *Assuring 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.*
- *Priests, deacons, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are urged to practice good hygiene, washing their hands before Mass begins, or using an alcohol-based anti-bacterial solution.*

- *Churches may want to consider offering hand sanitizer at the entrances to help limit the spread of the virus.*
- *Limit other opportunities for physical contact both before and after Mass (example – greeters should not shake hands with people as they enter or leave church).*
- *Vaccinations, good hygiene, avoiding sick people, and staying home if you are sick are the best ways to avoid transmitting the virus.*

The local health department will let us know if further actions need to be taken, and then you will be notified as quickly as possible.

The Catholic Schools Office has shared the following information with students and teachers:

The Catholic Schools Office reminds teachers and students of the following preventive measures:

- *Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.*
- *If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.*
- *Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.*
- *Avoid close contact with people who are sick.*
- *Stay home when you are sick.*
- *Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.*
- *Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.*

The safety of students, faculty and staff is the Catholic Schools Office's first priority. The office will continue to update schools as necessary.

In addition to these steps, the diocese – including the Catholic Schools Office – recommends that people across the diocese follow the recommendations of their local health departments regarding additional precautions in their areas. The diocese also recommends following the general guidelines issued by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. The CDC provides the following on its website (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html>):

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- *Avoid close contact with people who are sick.*

- *Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.*
- *Stay home when you are sick.*
- *Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.*
- *Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.*
- *Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.*
 - *CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.*
 - *Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others.*
- *Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.*
 - *If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.*

For information about handwashing, see <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/>

For information specific to healthcare, see <https://www.cdc.gov/handhygiene/index.html>

The Message will continue to provide updates as necessary. Because our print edition is a weekly, please visit our website and social media accounts for the latest information:

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