



CARDINAL RIGALI CENTER  
20 ARCHBISHOP MAY DRIVE  
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI 63119  
P) 314.792.7841  
F) 314.792.7842  
WWW.ARCHSTL.ORG

---

ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

---

March 2, 2020

Dear Priests and Deacons,

As the coronavirus becomes more prevalent in the nation's headlines, we are expecting questions to arise regarding the preparedness of our parishes in dealing with the outbreak. There is no cause for panic, but precautionary measures should be taken at this time to mitigate the spread of colds, flu, and other contagious illnesses. I offer the below to inform you of the steps the archdiocese is taking, as well as to support you as we work together to help address the concerns of the faithful. I urge you to please address these items with your parishioners at Masses; using the bulletin and parish website.

First, when discussing the coronavirus, we should only emphasize the facts that we know to be true, which are the following:

- Seasonal flu is currently making a bigger impact in our communities. There have been 10,000 deaths from flu in the U.S. this season, and two deaths from coronavirus so far.
- The potential global public health threat posed by this virus is high; however, right now, the immediate risk to most Americans is low.
- People at greater risk are those who have recently traveled to China or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.

Here's how we can help protect parishioners from the spread of illness when they gather for Mass:

- Sanitize all sacred vessels before and after all Masses (with soap and hot water), because germs may survive on surfaces up to 24 or more hours.
- Suspending the exchange of the sign of peace (or instructing that it be exchanged without physical contact).
- Advise parishioners to keep a distance of three feet from the nearest neighbor when possible.
- Share reminders that Holy Communion is encouraged to be received in the hand.
- Suspending the distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful via the chalice.
- Once a week the Holy Water fonts should be sanitized with the Holy Water being poured out on the ground.
- Encourage good hygiene, including alcohol-based hand sanitizer lotion in restrooms and public areas, and proper cough-and-sneeze etiquette. It is especially important for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to implement these measures.

- Remind the elderly—who are among the most vulnerable—that they have the option to participate in the Mass on TV via channels such as EWTN, and to request that Holy Communion be brought to their place of residence.
- Help identify those who are more at risk (i.e., elderly people living alone, persons with disabilities, children and teens), and check on them;
- People with a respiratory infection, the flu, a fever or a serious cold should be encouraged to stay home and reassured that they are not bound to attend weekend Mass.
- [Read more information about Influenza and the Liturgy from the USCCB.](#)

Please direct questions to the Office of Communications and Planning, which will support you in finding the answers you seek. You may contact them at [communications@archstl.org](mailto:communications@archstl.org) or 314.792.7633. Thank you for your work in helping to reduce the spread of all illnesses and for conveying this information to your parishioners.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and followed by the name "Robert J. Carlson".

Most Reverend Robert J. Carlson  
Archbishop of St. Louis