



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIocese of
SPRINGFIELD-CAPE GIRARDEAU

Office of the Bishop

March 4, 2020
Feast of St. Casimir

Dear Priests, Deacons and Parishioners,

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. While there is no cause for panic, it is good to be proactive and take precautionary measures.

On a practical level, I ask that the following precautions be implemented in order to protect parishioners from the spread of illness when they gather for Holy 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.
- Suspend the exchange of the sign of peace.
- Suspend holding hands at the Our Father (for those who do so).
- Suspend the distribution of Holy Communion via the chalice.
- Sanitize holy water fonts weekly or discontinue the use of holy water for the meantime.
- 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.
- Visit the website of your local or state health department for updates.

On a pastoral level, I ask the following practices:

- Encourage the sick to stay at home.
- Bring Holy Communion to the sick at their place of residence
- Identify those who are vulnerable, i.e., the elderly or disabled and check on them

You will also find attached a protocol for our Catholic schools and Parish Schools of Religion programs. With the assurance of my prayers for your health and well-being and united with Our Lady at the foot of the Cross, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Edward M. Rice
Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau

cc: Catholic School Principals
Enclosure