



BISHOP OF HAMILTON

March 4, 2020

Dear Reverend Monsignor,
Dear Reverend Father,

Recent news reports regarding the spread of the COVID-19 virus have prompted questions about various liturgical practices. I am happy to provide the following common-sense directives for our Diocese.

Handwashing – The advice of health care experts is that one of the most effective means to prevent the spread of viruses is frequent and complete handwashing. Parishes may wish to consider making hand sanitizers available to parishioners at the entrances of Churches, Halls and Parish Offices. Parish Priests and Pastoral Ministers may want to be especially attentive to regular handwashing, particularly between Masses or before and after visiting the sick.

Sign of Peace – There is no prescribed gesture for the Sign of Peace. Handshaking is not necessary. Pastors may advise their Parishioners to exchange the Sign of Peace with those near them by bowing and greeting with a simple “Peace to you.” The Sign of Peace is not to be omitted from the celebration of the Eucharist.

Reception of Holy Communion – The option to receive Holy Communion in the hand, or on the tongue, is up to the Communicant. During a viral outbreak people may wish to receive Holy Communion in the hand, but they are not to be denied if they choose to receive on the tongue. At this time there is no need to discontinue Communion on the tongue in the Diocese of Hamilton.

Communion from the Chalice – Holy Communion offered under both Species is a fuller sign of our faith in the Lord’s Eucharistic Presence. People who are sick with cold or flu, or other ailments should refrain from receiving from the Chalice. At this time, there is no need to discontinue Communion from the Chalice in the Diocese of Hamilton.

For those who bring Communion to the sick in Health Care Institutions, please follow the directions of the Institution you are visiting.

Further communication regarding the reception of Holy Communion may become necessary in the event of a major viral outbreak.

Let us be united in prayer for one another at the start of this Lenten Season. Let us pray also for all the sick, for their families and care-givers.

Sincerely in Christ and Mary Immaculate,

(Most Rev.) Douglas Crosby, O.M.I.,
Bishop of Hamilton

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