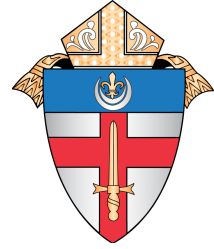


Memo



To: All priests, deacons, religious superiors, elementary and high school principals, chaplains, diocesan institutions

From: Jamie Schroeder
Chancellor

Re: Diocesan Response to COVID-19

Date: 13 March 2020

Update — Effective Immediately

In the interest of the health and safety of our faithful and to help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, any nonessential meetings, events or gatherings scheduled to be held **from now through April 3** at any of our parishes, Catholic schools, diocesan offices, religious houses and other diocesan institutions are to be postponed or cancelled.

Preventative Measures

1. Practice Proper Hygiene

- Frequent washing of hands with soap, under warm/hot water.
- Use hand sanitizer products, if available, after contact with foreign objects.
- Avoid direct hand to eye, hand to nose, or hand to mouth contact.
- Cover the mouth and nose with the bend of the arm when sneezing or coughing when a tissue is not readily available.
- Frequent cleaning and sterilization of surfaces like desktops, keyboards, phone receivers, doorknobs etc.

2. Acknowledgement and adherence to recommendations of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) of the U.S. Public Health Service and the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Human Services specific to a viral or bacterial outbreak.

Operational Responses

Should we enter a state of emergency whereby our diocesan entities are impacted by a health risk as determined by local, state or federal governments, the following will serve as the diocesan response procedure.

1. Catholic Schools — Directives

- a. The Diocesan Department of Catholic Schools will announce the decision to close Catholic schools. The decision to close will not be made by individual Catholic schools.

- b. Catholic schools will follow all recommendations made by local or state Health Departments that apply to schools.
- c. In the instances where a Catholic school closure occurs on the basis of disease prevention:
- Salaried employees will continue to be compensated at their current rate.
 - Hourly employees will be compensated at their hourly rate calculated on the stated hours for the position.
 - The faculty and staff are expected to meet the needs of the school community at the discretion of the principal.
 - Custodial staff will be provided all necessary safety wears and cleaning materials to conduct a disinfecting/deep clean of the premises prior to the reopening of the school.
 - All Catholic schools should be prepared for immediate implementation of “at home” instruction.
 - Per state regulations, educational institutions are allotted (up to) 10 electronic based learning days for remote instruction.

2. Parish Offices — Recommendations

Parish offices are often located outside of the school building and operate independently of the school. Additionally, parish offices are typically staffed with only a handful of employees.

- a. Parish offices in parishes with a Catholic school may choose to follow the operational schedule of the school. Decisions to close parish offices will be made at the parish.
- b. Parish offices in parishes without a Catholic school may choose to follow the response procedure of their county’s public school system. Decisions to close parish offices will be made at the parish.
- c. In the instances where a parish office closure occurs on the basis of disease prevention:
- Salaried employees will continue to be compensated at their current rate.
 - Hourly employees will be compensated at their hourly rate calculated on the stated hours for the position.
 - Custodial staff will be provided all necessary safety wears and cleaning materials to conduct a disinfecting/deep clean of the premises prior to the reopening of the parish.

3. Curia — Directives

- a. The Curia will remain operational as the Emergency Management Headquarters of the diocese.
- b. Decisions to close the Curia will be made by the Bishop in collaboration with the Episcopal Council.
- c. In the event the Curia closes for disease prevention:
- Essential personnel will be available onsite.
 - Salaried employees will continue to be compensated at their current rate.
 - Hourly employees will be compensated at their hourly rate calculated on the stated hours for the position.

Travel Restrictions

1. In instances where diocesan entities are on alert, but have not yet closed as a preventative measure, it is recommended that professional travel be limited. Professional travel to national-level events and to areas more severely impacted by the viral/bacterial outbreak is highly discouraged.
2. In instances where a diocesan school is closed as a preventative measure, professional travel by staff at that school is prohibited.
3. In instances where a parish or other diocesan location is closed as a preventative measure, professional travel by staff at that parish or location is strongly discouraged.

Liturgical Recommendations

The Bishop in collaboration with his pastoral staff and the diocesan Worship Office have issued the following guidelines in reference to the celebration of the Mass and other liturgical celebrations:

- 1. All priests, deacons, altar servers and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion must use an alcohol-based anti-bacterial solution before and after distributing Holy Communion.**
 - Discern how best to do this while maintaining the reverence of the Mass.
 - Ensure all vessels used at Mass, once purified, are thoroughly washed with soap and hot water after each use.
- 2. During all Masses and other liturgies:**
 - Refrain from physical contact during the Sign of Peace. (N.B. The sign of peace can be exchanged without physical contact, for example, by a bow/nod of the head and the words "Peace be with you.")
 - Refrain from the distribution of Holy Communion via the chalice. (Please consider options for any parishioners with celiac disease or sensitivity.)
 - Given the frequency of direct contact with saliva in the distribution of Holy Communion on the tongue, every consideration should be given by each individual to receive Holy Communion in open hands for the time being.
 - Refrain from using Holy Water fonts. Where possible, fonts should be emptied. Where not possible to empty, fonts should be covered.
- 3. The faithful who are sick or who are experiencing symptoms are not obliged to attend Mass.**
 - Catechism of the Catholic Church #2181 allows for serious reasons such as illness.

Note

This is a very fluid health event and diocesan staff are continually monitoring and discussing how best to respond. All of these policies and procedures will be evaluated and updated as circumstances evolve.

Any questions or concerns may be directed to Jamie Schroeder, chancellor, at JSchroeder@covdio.org or (859) 392-1500, and she will forward all questions to the appropriate Curia staff member.