



Office of the Bishop

March 13, 2020

Friday of the Second Week of Lent

TO: All Priests and Faithful in the Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma

FROM: Most Rev. David A. Konderla, Bishop of Tulsa 

SUBJECT: Health Concerns – Follow Up

Memorandum

May the grace and peace of Jesus Christ be with you. As we continue our Lenten journey, our annual flu season has been complicated this year by the heightened concern caused by the new strain of the COVID-19. It is important that we use prudence in both the information we access and in the precautions that we observe in order to minimize the spread of this infectious disease and the overreaction that can be caused by rumor and untrustworthy sources of news.

As Catholics, we need to remember that in times of distress faith moves our hearts to be concerned for our neighbor and be hopeful. We are men and women who believe in the power of prayer and in God's solicitous response to overcome adversity. Therefore, in addition to the statements issued by the Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma in recent days, I would like to confirm and add the following:

1. We will suspend the distribution of the Precious Blood and any physical exchange during the sign of peace until further notice. Holding hands during the Our Father is not part of the Roman Rite, this practice should be discouraged especially during the flu season.
2. Pastors should remove the Holy Water from fonts but ensure the Christian Faithful have access to this important sacramental for prayer and pious purposes e.g., the ability for them to fill a private container. Parishes can purchase very small plastic bottles from many different suppliers to aid parishioners in this purpose.
3. As the Church instructs and charity urges us to do, those who are sick with a contagious disease or caring for someone who is sick are dispensed from their obligation to attend Mass. In addition, those who feel vulnerable to infections due to age, illnesses, or other reasonable factors may abstain from public participation in the Mass. In place of that, we

encourage the faithful to meditate on the Scriptures, access televised or streamed celebrations of the Mass, and practice other devotions, keeping in their hearts the intentions of the Church, especially for those affected.

4. Because a priest could fall ill, he should maintain in the tabernacle a reasonable number of hosts so that a deacon could celebrate a Communion Service or Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest if it became necessary.
5. All out-of-state and out-of-the-country trips sponsored by parishes and other Catholic institutions will be suspended until Easter Sunday. The Diocese will offer further directions at that time. Diocesan schools should consult the Superintendent's statement on travel.
6. Pastors may postpone or cancel non-essential parochial events out of an abundance of caution.

In all these precautions, we should be guided by a desire to protect the most vulnerable persons among us and by a solid confidence that our peace, hope, and joy in this life come from our abiding faith in Jesus our Lord. Let us commend to him the sick and our desire to see a rapid end to this difficult season.

End of Memorandum