



CARDINAL MESSAGE AND GUIDANCE TO THE ARCHDIOCESE REGARDING COVID-19

March 12, 2020

My Dear Friends in Christ,

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) is now part of our public life—our world, our country, our state and our Archdiocese — together we must call on faith and reason to meet this challenge.

All citizens and the institutions that shape our common life are called to respond in solidarity to protect and care for each and all. In particular we must care for the most vulnerable among us because of age, health or socio-economic condition. Public authorities and the scientific/medical communities will guide us with facts and advice and we are called to respond to policies and programs they recommend.

The meaning of faith is that we are not alone in times of challenge. Faith is the foundation of hope, and hope is the capacity to address the complex challenges of life without being overcome by them. They are gifts which yield courage. We nourish faith and hope, and therefore courage, through prayer in our houses of worship, in our communities and in our homes.

We understand faith and hope as a complement to science and medicine. Our country is blessed with tremendous resources in the scientific and health care communities. Particular gratitude is owed to health care professionals at every level of care, especially those caring for the elderly.

In support of the guidance of public health officials, I have issued directives for the Catholic community of the Archdiocese. These will be updated as needed. To access the directives, please go to www.bostoncatholic.org/coronavirus.

In providing directives, which include the following, I acknowledge the need of individuals to make the necessary best judgements for their own well-being and that of their families:

(1.) Reception of Holy Communion: During this time of public health concerns we are temporarily suspending distribution of communion on the tongue and invite the faithful to reverently receive the Eucharist in their hand. This directive is motivated by care and concern for the health of our people, especially those who are most vulnerable. As soon as the need for this temporary policy has passed and it will be safe to do so we will return to the practice of distribution of communion on the tongue.

(2.) Holy Water Fonts: These should be emptied, cleaned and remain empty.

(3.) Public Events: Public gatherings in parishes such as dinners, lunches, and other social gatherings should be postponed or canceled until further notice;

(4.) Celebration of Mass: We will continue public celebration of daily and Sunday Mass. This is an exception to #3 but I judge at the moment this to be a necessary source of support for the community.

(5.) Vulnerable Individuals: Those at particular risk by reason of age or existing health conditions, are excused from the obligation to attend Mass. We encourage participation in the celebration of Mass broadcast on CatholicTV. Please consult your cable provider and network listings for local access.

Also, in response to inquiries about Catholic Appeal, activities scheduled for this weekend will be postponed until May 2/3 or another weekend that would be well suited for the parish. For those who wish to make a contribution currently can do so online (www.bostoncatholicappeal.org) or through the request you may have received in the mail.

I ask and rely upon pastors, priests, and deacons and others in our community to be particularly watchful for the sick and those in need of the anointing of the sick in these times. I ask all in administration to observe these norms and to cooperate with public officials.

May God bless our efforts; may Christ be our model of care for others and may Mary intercede for all the sick and suffering.

Cardinal Seán