

GENERAL DIRECTIVES IN PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF THE COVID-19 VIRUS

March 11, 2020

As of March 11 at 3:30 pm, there are 19 cases of Coronavirus reported in Alberta from a total of 98 confirmed cases in Canada. This week we also had the first person in Canada to die from the Coronavirus. All those infected are travel-related and there is no evidence of spread from within the community. While Alberta Health Services assesses the current risk in Alberta as low, the World Health Organization has declared this a pandemic. Therefore, the Diocese of Calgary is putting in place the following measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

LITURGICAL MEASURES

- At the Sign of Peace, refrain from shaking hands – a simple bow, nod, or “Peace be with you” to your neighbour is appropriate.
- Baptismal and Holy Water fonts are to be emptied and are to be sanitized with water and bleach
- Holy Communion will only be distributed under the Body of Christ (Host).
 - Only priests may distribute Holy Communion to those who choose to receive on their tongue at a designated area apart from the main aisle. Note: It has been shared by some public health experts that there is no indication of increased risk of infection in receiving the host either on the tongue or in the hand.
 - Those who choose to receive Holy Communion in the hand will be asked to approach the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion or a priest who is not distributing Communion to those receiving on the tongue.
- Only priests are to consume the Precious Blood.
- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who feel uncomfortable distributing Holy Communion should be excused from this ministry.

These measures are effective immediately and will remain in place until notified otherwise by the Diocese.

PASTORAL CARE MINISTERS

Pastoral care ministers who bring Holy Communion to shut-ins should refrain from visiting homes or facilities where cases of influenza or COVID-19 have been reported.

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PUBLIC GATHERINGS

We are in communication with the City of Calgary and will continue to monitor daily the Alberta Health Services directives on public gatherings.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL & PILGRIMAGES

The Provincial Chief Medical Officer has advised that persons over 65 not travel outside Canada. There are always health risks when you travel. Please check the following destinations that have travel health notices for COVID-19: China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Iran, Japan, Italy, Singapore, South Korea, Spain. Be aware of evolving travel advisories to different regions.

You should expect increased health screening measures at points of entry for international destinations, including airports. Some airports are imposing control measures, including quarantines. Public health services advise that if you become sick while travelling, contact a health professional to explain your symptoms. If you become sick upon your return, call Health Link at 811 for instructions.

Upon your return to the Diocese from international travel, even if you are feeling well, the Diocese now requires you to voluntarily self-isolate until 14 days have passed since your trip. We are taking the necessary precautions to safeguard the health of our parishioners and the public at this time.

If you are taking a group for a pilgrimage, if at all possible, the Diocese recommends postponing or cancelling as the best possible precaution. Please discuss this option with your operator.

To continue to support and maintain community health safety, the following reminders are to be shared with parishioners so that we reduce the risk to seniors and those with underlying conditions who are the biggest risk groups:

- Frequently and properly wash hands with soap and water
- Sneeze and cough into your sleeve
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Cleaning staff in churches are to sanitize surfaces that are frequently touched
- The obligation to attend Sunday Mass does not apply to those who are ill, especially those who suffer from a contagious illness; those with flu-like symptoms should remain at home so as to not spread the virus to others.

