



**DIRECTIVES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF MASS
IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA
IN RESPONSE TO THE POTENTIAL SPREAD
OF THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)
March 4, 2020**

The potential spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the United States and locally at this point requires a pastoral response that impacts the celebration of Mass in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Effective immediately, the following directives are to be observed:

- **HOLY COMMUNION**

All priests, deacons and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are to wash their hands with soap and water prior to the celebration of Mass. A hand sanitizer may be used in the pew by the extraordinary minister prior to the distribution of Holy Communion. In addition to the usual purification of fingers with water after the distribution of Holy Communion, all Communion ministers should again wash their hands. *The Centers for Disease Control states that hand washing is the most effective way to prevent the spread of the virus.*

The distribution of the Precious Blood to liturgical ministers and the faithful is to be suspended. As Catholics our Faith informs us that the whole Christ, that is his Body and Blood, is present when only the host is received. Provisions, however, should be made for Catholics who can only receive the Precious Blood for Communion because of celiac conditions.

- **SIGN OF PEACE**

The invitation to the Sign of Peace, although a regular part of our liturgical practice, is always an option. Pastors should consult the local community for how to best observe the Sign of Peace during this period. Perhaps a head bow could replace the customary handshake.

Additionally, holy water fonts are to be drained and refreshed more frequently than usual to avoid any possible contamination.

Intentions for the prevention of the virus and for those effected should be included in the Universal Prayer.

The above directives are to be observed until further notice. Everyone is encouraged both during the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy and at all times to be thoughtful and vigilant in practices that prevent the spread of sickness and disease and protect the good health of one another.