

Parish Coronavirus Reference Group

Update 3, 12 March 2020

Dear Parish Members,

As I have spoken about at last weekend's Masses, a Corona Virus Reference Group has been formed to put us on 'the front foot' in terms of our preparedness and support of our Parish family, and how we manage the Corona Virus issue proactively, and sensitively going forward.

The eight Members of our Parish Coronavirus Reference Group are – Margaret Halpin, Susan Turner, Bernie Brearley, Cynthia Rowan, Tom Gordon, Allan and Alison Isaak and Fr Gerry. After prayer, the group discussed spirituality, reverence and a brief history of church practices of receiving Holy Communion. There was consensus that we need to acknowledge the pain that some in the community will experience concerning the proactive recommendations by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

The recommendations included:

- Individuals should consider their own health, including any potential to infect others with a contagious disease, before attending a public liturgical celebration.
- Holy Water should be temporarily removed from stoups at the doors of churches to reduce the possibility of transmission of the virus. Holy Water should continue to be available for people to take home.
- Make alcohol-based gels or rubs (or like products) available near entrances, at the altar, Sacrament of Reconciliation room etc.
- When exchanging the Sign of Peace, avoid shaking hands but say "Peace be with you" and offer a smile, wave, nod or bow.
- The Celebrant and all Ministers of Holy Communion should take particular care to wash their hands before and after distributing. Appropriate means should be made available.
- Parishes should cease distributing Holy Communion from the Chalice until further notice. The faithful should be reminded that Christ is fully present under either species.
- The coronavirus is easily spread through saliva. In celebrations of the Ordinary Form of the Latin Rite, it is therefore recommended that the Body of Christ only be administered in the hand because of the high risk of transmission if people continue to receive on the tongue. Ministers should seek to avoid contact with the communicant's hands.
- The faithful who are too unwell to attend Sunday Mass – whether due to coronavirus or some other condition – or are at particular risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus can honour their Sunday obligation by participating in a time of prayer within the home, reading the Scriptures or watching Mass on television or online (<http://bit.ly/MassOnDemand>).

In addition, information from World Health Organisation, Australian and Queensland Government Health Departments and Archdiocese of Brisbane sources will provide guidance to the Group as a basis for determining how we move forward as a parish community in managing the many implications for our liturgical and operational traditions and processes in the face of Corona Virus concerns.

More information on what we are doing regarding specific aspects of our church and parish life can be found [here](#)

Fr Gerry Hefferan, 12 March 2020