

Dear Brothers & Sisters of the Diocese of San Joaquin,

I write to you because the news coverage on the Corona Virus (COVID 19) outbreak has raised questions & concerns for our congregations. In addition, the most recent case in the bay area brings this close to home.

First, pray for those afflicted around the world, for God to guide government and medical leaders in for caring the sick, and for the development of new vaccines.

Second, be aware that the impact in the United States is still quite limited (14 confirmed cases in the US as of 2/26) and our country is well positioned to deal with any outbreaks.

Third, be informed. I recommend periodically checking the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at this www.cdc.gov

Fourth, be prepared. Please remember that people who fear infection need the comfort of visual confirmation that we are being intentional in caring for them. I recommend the following actions:

1. While scientific studies have confirmed there is very little risk of transmitting a disease through the Common cup, you can remind them that they may receive only the host and in doing so they are receiving the full grace of communion.
2. Clergy and Lay Eucharistic Ministers should use hand sanitizer right before they begin distributing the Communion elements. (The Credence Table is appropriate without making a show of it).
3. Encourage any members with flu symptoms or a fever within the last 24 hours to stay at home.
4. Encourage members NOT to shake hands or kiss during the passing of the peace.
5. Provide several containers of hand sanitizer around your congregation in highly visible and accessible areas. Make sure there is a container available for members to use before taking Holy Communion.

6. Provide boxes of Kleenex and facial tissue in the sanctuary so that those members who are coughing and sneezing can safely cover their mouths and nose. Provide trashcans for the used tissues.
7. Before and after officiating, all clergy should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
8. Take care of yourself during pastoral visitations. Follow all infection control measures in place at hospitals.
9. Encourage your ushers and counters to wash their hands thoroughly after service or handling money.

We will monitor developments and pass onto you any helpful resources and information as they are needed and become available.

I pray for God's guidance for you and His continued blessing upon our congregations.

Bp. Eric Menees