



Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide

Apostolic Administrator



March 12, 2020
20/097

Guidelines for preventing the spread of coronavirus

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

A number of questions have arisen concerning Holy Week, visiting the sick and collections.

I offer these guidelines:

I am sure that commonsense and prudence of the priests and deacons will ensure that everything is done to contain the possible spread of the coronavirus. We have taken advice on these items from infectious disease control specialists.

Concerning Holy Week, I offer these guidelines:

- Mass of Chrism and Holy Thursday - concelebrating priests should receive the Precious Blood through intinction only. At the Cathedral this will be the presumed practice. It should also apply to any concelebration. If sharing the cup, the host should be immersed without any part of the hand touching the contents of the cup. The chalices should remain on the altar, so it is not necessary for concelebrants to touch the metal of the chalice.
- Washing of the Feet – it should still be possible to conduct this in the ordinary manner, presuming that individual towels are used. The water should be poured over the foot and the foot should not be immersed in the bowl, and it would be advisable to refrain from kissing the foot. There should be separate bowls for clean water and used water.
- Veneration of the Cross – this should be restricted to a bow.

Aged Care Homes:

- In visiting the sick for Holy Communion and in carrying out the anointing, this should still be possible if the priest makes sure to wash his hands with alcohol-based gel for at least 20 seconds both before and after visiting each person and/or their environment. If patients with symptoms of coronavirus need to be visited, seek advice from a Registered Nurse in the facility about protective measures.

Collections

- This is an area of significant concern as the plate is normally handed from person to person. Priests may come up with more creative ideas, but the practice of substituting a bag on the end of a pole (at least one metre in length) for the plate seems a good way of avoiding transmission. This practice still persists in some churches but it is highly recommended that all clergy introduce this practice. Someone may have an idea about how or where such poles and bags can be acquired. Some parishes have wisely already introduced the practice of asking the counters to wear latex gloves. Naturally they should also wash their hands with alcohol-based disinfectant before and after the counting. Money would be a rich source of possible infection.

It was brought to my attention that a priest chaplain (unnamed) said he would continue to give Communion on the tongue. I sent a directive to his community. His action is highly irresponsible as saliva has such a high potential for transmission of this virus. The priest could infect any other communicants and himself.

The general response from our priests and parishes is that the directives regarding Holy Communion have been appreciated as people understand the reason why. I express my own appreciation to those people whose devotion takes them strongly to the practice of Communion on the tongue but who have complied with the need to adapt.

If there are any other suggestions or queries, Father Marshall, Fr Monaghan and myself would appreciate receiving them.

With every good wish,

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Greg O'Kelly SJ".

Bishop Greg O'Kelly SJ
Apostolic Administrator, Archdiocese of Adelaide
Bishop of Diocese of Port Pirie