

Coronavirus Updates

The following is from Bishop Steven Biegler, Bishop of the Diocese of Cheyenne, dated March 13, 2020.

*As the Coronavirus continues to spread throughout the United States, the Diocese of Cheyenne is committed to taking all reasonable precautions to prevent transmission of the virus. In addition to the directives issued on March 3, 2020 (summarized below), from March 13 to April 8, 2020, a **dispensation from the obligation to attend Holy Mass (canon 1245) is granted to:***

- *those of any age who are ill, and*
- *those with an underlying health condition, such as chronic lung disease, COPD, asthma, etc.*
- *Moreover, any person over 60 years old may choose to use this dispensation.*

Stay home if you are sick or in a high-risk category, since this virus is primarily transmitted through contact with respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Sunday Mass is broadcast on K2 (ABC) at 9 AM.

CORONAVIRUS PRECAUTIONS

- *Mandatory handwashing for all ministers and thorough washing of all liturgical vessels.*
- *Permission to suspend Holy Communion from the Chalice accompanied by encouragement to receive Holy Communion in the hand and not on the tongue.*
- *Permission to suspend physical contact during the Sign of Peace.*
- *Permission to empty Holy Water fonts.*

Please note: these precautions are of limited effectiveness. They are no substitute for staying home when you are ill. We will continue to monitor the progression of this disease and make appropriate recommendations.

Clergy and lay leaders are to make prudent decisions so that non-essential gatherings are avoided. In addition to the effect on physical health, I am concerned about the social and economic impacts of this outbreak. Isolation and loneliness are already experienced by so many people. I encourage clergy to discuss with Finance and Pastoral Councils how the parish might offer outreach to those who are affected by social isolation or how they could collaborate with the local community to provide support to those needing financial aid because of health care costs or lack of employment.

Here at St. Matthew's, in addition to the specific directives from Bishop Steven, we are discontinuing our Lenten soup suppers, coffee and donuts, and Children's Liturgy of the Word. We are also looking at each program area to consider how we can prepare for remote learning and connectivity. The God's Plan Marriage Retreat and the Adult Confirmation Preparation Retreat will both be rescheduled once the threat of infection has passed. RCIA and other programming will continue on a case-by-case basis. At this time, where schools in Campbell and Crook Counties are still in session, we will continue with our children and youth ministry programming. With all activities please follow the guidelines laid out above: If you are sick or in any of the above at-risk categories, stay home. If you have questions about specific programs or if you have a need, please contact any of the clergy or staff at the offices, 682-3319.

We are also critically aware of the danger of isolation and fear in these challenging times. For those who are unable to attend Mass because of illness or concerns about infection, you are invited to

still pray the Mass. K2 out of Casper broadcasts the TV Mass for Wyoming each Sunday at 9 a.m., and ETWN has Mass, the rosary and other Catholic programming available. We are also looking at the possibility of live streaming our local parish mass to give a local connection to those who are unable to attend. As a ministerial team, we are here to walk with and support you as we can, including ministering by phone. As the Body of Christ, it is also important that we all reach out to each other in care, support and prayer. These are the antidotes to the fear and uncertainty that grips our hearts.

This is also the time for us as a community to be strong in prayer. If you are unable to come to Mass, make a Spiritual Communion and welcome Christ into your heart; be one with him through the Mass; let Him spiritually feed and strengthen you. This is a prayer for a Spiritual Communion: *My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.* Continue the practice of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament or make a visit to Christ in the Church, before the Tabernacle. Pray the Rosary and invoke the intercession of our Blessed Mother. Call someone and pray with them over the phone or on social media. Let these days be ones that draw us closer to Christ who is the healer of all disease and relieves us of our fear. He is the light that breaks through these times of darkness.

Prayer for a Pandemic

May we who are merely inconvenienced
remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors
remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home
remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close
remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips
remember those that have no place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market
remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home
remember those who have no home.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other,
let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors.

Amen.

May God surround us with the protection of our Guardian Angels, the Archangels, our Blessed Mother and all the saints. And, may God bless each of us, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In Christ,
Fr. Cliff