



For all things give thanks.

1 THESS 5:18

PASTORAL STATEMENT BY BISHOP BRIAN MASCORD

Temporary Mass changes as a result of the increasing risk of coronavirus

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ

As you are aware, the spread of coronavirus, COVID-19, continues to present challenges to health authorities around the world, including here in Australia.

As a result of the increased spread of coronavirus and what we know about its transmission, many dioceses around the world and closer to home have temporarily altered certain practices in the Mass to ensure the health and safety of parishioners.

With this precedent—and with the wellbeing of all parishioners of our diocese in mind—I am issuing the following directives (effective immediately) to all clergy, religious and the lay faithful in the Diocese of Wollongong:

- In those parishes and communities in the diocese where holy Communion is distributed under both kinds, this practice will cease. **Communion of the Precious Blood will be for the celebrant only.**
- Given that one of the easiest ways to transmit a virus is by the transmission of saliva, **Communion will be received only in the hand.**
- **Clergy and parishioners are not to shake hands during the sign of peace**, but should acknowledge each other at the exchange with the words, “Peace be with you.”
- All ministers of holy Communion (both ordinary and extraordinary) are to **use hand sanitisers before the distribution of holy Communion** commences, and are **not to physically touch anyone in the act of blessing.**
- **Holy water fonts are to be emptied or removed.**

These directives are informed by the latest advice from the Australian Government Department of Health which states that everyone should practise good hygiene to protect against coronavirus infection, including “avoiding close contact with others, such as touching”.

These directives will remain in place until the need for them ceases. We are closely monitoring the situation and will provide further advice as necessary. In the meantime, everyone is encouraged to monitor local and national health advice, and to practise good hygiene, including washing hands often with soap and water.

Please join me in praying for all those who have passed away or been affected by coronavirus; for the women and men working tirelessly to care for those affected; and for the development of a vaccine to keep us all safe.

Yours in Christ

Most Rev Brian G Mascord DD
BISHOP OF WOLLONGONG

4 March 2020

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