



## STATEMENT REGARDING COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

March 6, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The news reports regarding the spread of the COVID-19 virus are raising questions about the implications for liturgical practices. Accordingly, I am providing these guidelines which are rooted in practices for good hygiene to reduce the risk of infection.

**Handwashing** – One of the most effective means to prevent the spread of viruses is frequent and thorough handwashing. Parishes may wish to consider making hand sanitizers available to parishioners at the entrances of Churches, Halls and Parish Offices. Parish Priests and Pastoral Ministers should be especially attentive to regular handwashing, particularly between Masses or before and after visiting the sick.

**Sign of Peace** – “In the dioceses of Canada, the sign of peace is given by a handshake or a bow.” (GIRM, 82, page 31.) At this time, Pastors may advise their Parishioners to exchange the Sign of Peace by a bow and a greeting of “Peace of Christ” or another appropriate greeting. The Sign of Peace is not to be omitted from the celebration of the Eucharist.

**Reception of Holy Communion** – The option to receive Holy Communion in the hand, or on the tongue, is up to the Communicant. During a viral outbreak people may wish to receive Holy Communion in the hand, but they are not to be denied if they choose to receive on the tongue.

**Communion from the Chalice** – Christ is fully present in each species. Those who are ill or suspect illness should refrain from receiving from the chalice. At this time, there is no need to discontinue Communion from the Chalice. For those who bring Communion to the sick in Health Care Institutions, please follow the directions of the Institution you are visiting.

The obligation to attend Sunday Mass does not apply to those who are ill, especially those who suffer from a contagious illness. Those with flu-like symptoms may choose to remain at home in order not to spread the virus to others.

Let us be united in prayer for all those who are impacted by illness, for their families and care-givers. This situation will continue to be monitored and further guidelines may be issued as necessary.

Yours in Christ,

†Most Reverend Daniel J. Miehms  
Bishop of Peterborough