

What Should We Do?

The World Health Organization has declared the coronavirus a pandemic, reflecting the virus' spread across the globe, according to WHO Chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Tedros emphasized that there are aggressive steps that can be taken to beat back the spread of this particular virus, and these are: prevention, preparedness, public health, political leadership, and most of all...people. "We're in this together to do the right thing with calm," he emphasized. And without fear!

Which means there are things we can do at St. Clare to help minimize the spreading of this virus here, but it also means understanding the constant battle we find ourselves in between our human condition and our spiritual nature.

We have already put some measures in place:

- Installation of a hand soap stand near the front door, along with boxes of tissue.
- Sterilizing all the vessels used at Mass, after each Mass and before the next Mass.
- Emptying and cleaning both the holy water fonts inside the doors, as well as emptying and cleaning the large holy water container, at the end of each week.
- Wiping down the pews, the cry room, and the bathrooms with Lysol Wipes twice a week.
- Encouraging people to stay at home if they are sick.
- Placing extra boxes of tissues in the hallway and inside of the Church.

These are the practical measures we are taking at St. Clare.

But there are also some who feel strongly that precautions should also be taken within the context of the celebration of the Eucharist...such as suspending the Sign of Peace or "no handshake zones," and doing away with the Precious Blood meant for the congregation. These are harder to discern when it diminishes the purpose and meaning of the celebration of the Eucharist, and how to respond to them.

First, the Sign of Peace. The Sign of Peace comes after the prayer in which Jesus tells his Apostles, "Peace I leave you, my peace I give you..." What it must have meant to the Apostles, it certainly means to us...and expression of peace, communion, and charity. Aware that *communion* (meaning "union with") is the sign and source of our reconciliation and union with God and one another, we make a gesture of union and forgiveness with those around us through a sign of peace.

Traditionally that has been a handshake, but if people want to wave, show the peace sign, or bump elbows (a growing trend), then by all means do so, but at the same time **SAY SOMETHING** to the person closest to you to signal peace and joy between two individuals.

Of more concern is doing away with the Precious Blood meant for the congregation to fulfill the commandment by Jesus to "eat my body, drink my blood." There are those who feel fulfilled in this commandment when they receive both the Body and the Precious Blood as their sign of communion with Our Lord, even though both species contain the very body and blood, soul and divinity of Christ.

Those who may be leery of receiving the Precious Blood are not obligated to partake of that species. The Body of Christ will suffice. As for the means of receiving the Body of Christ, it's always a choice of receiving on the tongue or in the hand. As a precautionary means, perhaps people might consider receiving in the hand and not on the tongue, but it is still a choice one makes.

As we leave the church assembly and church building, we take something with us. What happens in our lives during the week gives deeper meaning to the ritual actions we've celebrated at Mass, whether it's family, work with the poor, or just plain work. It's only in relation to our daily lives that the full meaning of the ritual actions of the Mass becomes clear to us...to welcome each day with joy and peace...and not one of fear.

Sincerely,

