Diocese of Gary Offers Recommendations Regarding Safe and Courteous Practices during Mass

With the bishop’s support, the Office of Worship issued a memo on March 4, to all parishes, emphasizing the importance of discussing particular methods for safe and courteous practices during Sunday Mass and other liturgical gatherings. Pastors have been asked to share this information with parishioners through announcements and parish websites. Information shared with parishes included the following reminders:

- If you are unsure about the severity of an illness, either yours or a fellow worshiper’s, during the sign of peace you should courteously offer Christ’s peace by using the usual words “Peace be with you” with a slight bow of your head towards your fellow parishioner.

- If you have a weak immune system or are compromised by age or potential illness, you should refrain from receiving the Precious Blood.

- Reception of the Sacred Host on the hand is the best way to reduce the spread of infectious germs. If you are not feeling well or are concerned about your health, you are highly encouraged to receive communion in the hand.

- To safeguard against spreading germs, healthcare professionals recommend washing hands regularly or using alcohol-based hand gels when washing hands is not immediately possible. Use the inside of your elbow to cover your mouth if you need to sneeze or cough.

If you remain at home due to illness and cannot participate in the Sunday Eucharist, you are dispensed from the obligation to attend and do not incur a mortal sin. At home you are encouraged to pray and reflect with the Sunday readings and if possible to view the Mass on television. Mass from Mercy Home in Chicago is broadcast at 9:30 a.m. (CST), on WGN each Sunday.

The USCCB continues to monitor the CDC for community health concerns. The Diocese of Gary will offer updated recommendations and policies regarding the coronavirus. Let us remember in our prayers health care workers who are striving to control and eradicate this virus, as well as those who have been affected by it.

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