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## NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PREPARATION GUIDELINES FOR PARISHES, SCHOOLS AND OTHER MINISTRIES IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES

As communities and public health officials respond to the outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and closely monitor its presence and progression in different parts of the world, the Catholic Church in the United States stands in solidarity with those affected by the novel coronavirus and their families and the health workers who are valiantly trying to diagnose and treat patients. We offer our prayers for healing and support for those organizations, both domestic and international, working to provide medical supplies and assistance to address this serious risk to public health.

**While the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has stated that the immediate risk of this new virus to the American public is believed to be low at this time, everyone can do their part to help respond and limit the impact of this emerging public health concern. The Archdiocese recommends the following for all at parishes, offices and ministries (in accordance with the guidance from the CDC and the County Departments of Public Health in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles):**

- **Stay home when you are sick.** Contact your healthcare provider and tell them about your symptoms and your travel. Please encourage parishioners, students, parents, staff and others to stay home if they are sick and be prepared to provide accommodations that allow for employees and students to stay home.
- It is currently flu and respiratory disease season and CDC recommends getting a flu vaccine, taking everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs, and taking flu antivirals if prescribed.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Limit close contact, like kissing and sharing cups or utensils, with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. If you do not have a tissue, use your sleeve (not your hands).
- Facemasks are most effective when used appropriately by health care workers and people who are sick.
- If you have been in a country with confirmed cases of infection or have been exposed to someone sick with COVID-19 in the last 14 days, you will face some limitations on movement and activity. Please follow instructions from healthcare providers during this time. Your cooperation is integral to the ongoing public health response to try to slow spread of this virus. If you develop COVID-19 symptoms, contact your healthcare provider, and tell them about your symptoms and your travel or exposure to a COVID-19 patient. **For people who are ill with COVID-19, please follow [CDC guidance on how to reduce the risk of spreading your illness to others.](#)**

**Remember:** It is important to report any possible cases of infection and maintain good communication with all in your ministries and the public.

### **Reporting and Communication Recommendations:**

- **All locations in the Archdiocese should maintain close contact with the Archdiocesan central offices to determine and report verified cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.** Reports of verified infections must also be made to the county health department (*see web site information below*). If the sick person lives in a county different from the parish or organization then both counties must be notified.
- **Control unfounded rumors of possible infection at your site.** Develop communication tools to inform parents and staff (letters, website posting). Contact the Communications Department of the Archdiocese at [communications@la-archdiocese.org](mailto:communications@la-archdiocese.org) if you require assistance.
- **If contacted by the media,** you should refer them to the Archdiocesan Media Relations Office at 213-637-7215 and inform your supervisor at the archdiocesan central office, or your Regional Bishop in the case of a pastor. Media Relations will speak with the press.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OFFICE OF WORSHIP**

To date it has been decided not to put any restrictions on celebration of the Mass. However, we encourage the exercise of vigilance and discretion at the local level. Please refer to the [recommendations](#) sent by the Office of Worship.

#### **What Pastors, Principals, Directors of Religious Education and other Ministries Can Do to Prevent the Spread of the COVID-19 Virus**

1. **Staff members, teachers, maintenance staff should stay home when sick and not return until they have received permission from the attending healthcare professional.** Inform parents of sick students and/or infected adult staff to expect follow up communication on all absentees to determine nature of illness. **Keep an eye out for sick individuals and send them home for further evaluation.** If they are infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) virus, they should stay home until a healthcare professional recommends they return.
2. **Move individuals who become sick** at your site to a separate room until they can be sent home. Limit the number of staff who take care of the sick person and provide a surgical mask for the sick person to wear if they can tolerate it.
3. **Remind staff and students to practice good hand hygiene** and provide the time and supplies (easy access to running water and soap or alcohol-based hand cleaners) for them to wash their hands as often as necessary.
4. **Educate and encourage staff and students to cover their mouths and noses** with a tissue when they cough or sneeze. Also, provide them with easy access to tissues. Remind them to cover coughs or sneezes using their elbow instead of their hand when a tissue is not available. **Be a good role model** by practicing good hand hygiene and covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
5. **Clean surfaces and items** that are more likely to have frequent hand contact such as desks, doorknobs, keyboards, or pens, with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas.
6. **All parishes and other locations should develop a plan to cover key responsibilities** in the event multiple staff members are out sick. **If staff members have young children, ask them to plan ahead** for childcare if a child gets sick or his or her school is dismissed.
7. **Programs involving youth ministry** should revise their policies and incentives to avoid unknowingly penalizing students who stay home when they are sick. Arrange for a way for students who stay home to make up program requirements. Maintain good communication with parents at all times.

**Questions to Ask** if an employee or student calls in sick or is sent home due to illness:

1. Designate a specific staff member who will take charge of sick calls and ask the following questions of those who call in sick:
  - a. Do you have a fever, cough, chills or any other symptoms of the coronavirus?
  - b. Where have you traveled within the last two weeks?
  - c. With whom have you been in contact at this location or in your program?
  - d. Are you planning to see a doctor? When?
  - e. Is the doctor testing you for something other than the common flu?
  - f. Please let us know if the doctor should confirm that you have the novel coronavirus. We only want to help prevent the spread of this virus and will not embarrass you personally in any way.
2. Follow up on all sick calls if the person is out for a number of days. Repeat the questions above. Show that you care about the person's health and recovery and respect their need for privacy. Also let them know that you are obligated to report any cases of novel coronavirus (Covid-19) to the county health department.
3. Any confirmed cases of infection must be reported immediately to appropriate county health department and to the Archdiocese. More than one county may need to be notified.

**\*\*It is important to continue to encourage welcoming environments for ALL members of our community. The immediate risk to the general public is low Neither the California Department of Public Health nor Los Angeles County Public Health recommends that scheduled events be canceled at this time due to novel coronavirus.\*\***

Always check with reliable sources for the up-to-date, accurate information about novel coronavirus. Information is available from the [California Department of Public Health](#) (CDPH, State); [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC, National); and [World Health Organization](#) (WHO, International). In addition, locally in our Archdiocese, the county departments of public health in [Los Angeles](#), [Ventura](#) and [Santa Barbara](#) have important information and resources on their respective websites.

#### **Additional Resources:**

[CDC What the Public Should Do Flier](#)  
[LACDPH Infographic](#)  
[LACDPH FAQ](#)  
[LA County Guidance for Schools](#)  
[State Guidance for Schools](#)

#### **Reporting Contacts by County**

[LA County](#)  
[Ventura County](#)  
[Santa Barbara County](#)  
[Orange County](#)

Representatives from the Archdiocese are in communication with local health officials and are monitoring the situation. We will be in continued communication with you as this matter progresses in order to provide you with the most up-to-date and accurate information and best practices. We will also post updated information and resources on the Archdiocese's emergency preparedness webpage: [lacatholics.org/emergency](http://lacatholics.org/emergency).

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