

Archdiocese of Southwark

Coronavirus Update

Archbishop John Wilson has asked that the message below be circulated as we are now moving to Stage 2 of the CBCEW guidelines.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has today [updated its advice to Dioceses and Parishes](#) regarding the necessary measures to be taken to combat the spread of the Coronavirus.

We are now at **Stage 2** of the advice, a copy of which is attached along with a **Decree** relating to these. **This Decree is mandatory within the Archdiocese.**

All measures outlined in Stages 1 and 2 should now become effective.

Please read the advice carefully and make sure that your parish communities and facilities are compliant.

With respect to the specific measures of Stage 2, the Decree outlines the following which must now be implemented:

- 1. The sign of peace is to be suspended at Mass. In order not to create confusion in the minds of the lay faithful, I request that all priests and deacons simply omit any reference to the offering of the sign of peace, prior to the *Agnus Dei*.**
- 2. Holy Communion from the chalice shall cease to be offered to the lay faithful. The practice of intinction is not to be introduced as an alternative.**

3. **Those who choose to receive Holy Communion on the tongue should be encouraged to receive on the hand instead. Their doing this represents an act of loving charity to their community.**
4. **Holy water stoups in churches and chapels are to be emptied.**
5. **Churches and chapels that are open daily for private prayer should continue to remain open. Care should be given to ensuring that surfaces of high contact (e.g. light switches, door handles and areas around the door) are regularly sanitized throughout the day.**
6. **Ministers should wash and also sanitise their hands before and after distributing Holy Communion. Shared towels should not be used in toilet areas or the sacristy.**
7. **Shared hymnbooks and Mass books should cease to be used. Single-use Mass sheets may be used; though these should be disposed-of immediately after use.**
8. **A decision will be made nearer the time as to whether on Good Friday, the traditional 'Veneration of the Cross' is to be observed by a simple genuflection.**

The Decree is effective for four weeks after which these requirements shall either be rescinded or renewed. These requirements are also subject to amendment at any point.

In addition, key things for parishes to do are:

1. **Ensure everyone maintains good hygiene (we should be doing this already) especially at Mass and parish gatherings. The best way of protecting us from spread is for everyone to use universal good hygiene, which will effectively disrupt spread of the virus. So display the public information poster attached, which states: - Catch it - sneeze into a tissue - Bin it – bin the tissue - Kill it –**

wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol hand gel · Do not touch your face unless you've washed your hands

- 2. Ensure good regular cleaning of surfaces lots of people touch regularly, including such things as door handles.**
- 3. Ask everyone attending Mass to sanitise their hands as they come into church using sanitised gel dispensers (make these available in porches or entrances).**
- 4. Ensure ministers of the Eucharist sanitise their hands before and after distributing communion (we should be doing this anyway as a matter of course.) This can be done by washing hands thoroughly (for 20 seconds at least with soap and water) discreetly before proceeding to the sanctuary or using good quality hand gel discreetly.**
- 5. Remember to use good hand washing and gel use technique. You can find more here <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthybody/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/> and a poster here <https://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/resources/posters/en/> b. People who do catering are especially important for hand hygiene, and it is very important to ensure cups and utensils are properly washed and cleaned and surfaces cleaned**
- 6. When visiting parishioners at home, wash hands before giving the sacraments. No pastoral visits to people who are self-isolating until isolation ends. However do offer phone support.**
- 7. Visits to people in care homes or Hospitals should follow advice from the staff on infection control.**
- 8. Advise those most vulnerable (elderly, people with weakened immune systems and long term conditions like cancer, diabetes and heart disease) to refrain from large parish gatherings and stay at home.**
- 9. Ask anyone with cold or flu symptoms to refrain from attending Liturgy, public events not attend the sacrament of reconciliation**

if symptomatic (They may have an ordinary cold but equally it is important to ensure a precautionary approach.)

10. Suspend catering (teas, coffees etc) at large parish gatherings where multiple people touch mugs, utensils, biscuits etc.

This information, together with other resources and a Q & A can be found at: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/health-social-care/coronavirus-guidelines/>

Please now put in the place the measures outlined across all aspects of parish life. They are to protect everyone, especially the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions.

Finally, please pray for those who are suffering from the Coronavirus, those who have died because of it, and all those working to prevent it spreading and to care for those affected.

With sincere thanks for your assistance

Yours devotedly in Christ

Most Rev John Wilson
Archbishop of Southwark