



We proclaim a crucified Christ

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28 February 2020

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Guidance for Parishes

Dear Bishops, Fathers, Deacons and colleagues,

Due to the rapidly changing situation in respect to the threat posed by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), and acting on the advice of the Australian and Victorian Department of Health, the following precautionary measures are to apply across the Archdiocese of Melbourne **effective from today, 28 February 2020.**

- **Holy Communion:** The distribution of Holy Communion under Both Species is to cease. The chalice is not to be shared at any Masses, and is for the celebrant(s) only.
- **Ministers of Communion:** Ensure that all Ministers of the Eucharist, including Clergy, sanitise their hands before and after distributing Holy Communion. It is always good practice to supply tissues and hand gels at Church liturgies and gatherings, particularly for Ministers of the Eucharist, along with bins for disposal of used tissues.
- **Rite of Peace:** There is no need to take special measures on suspending the Rite of Peace, however parishioners with coughs and sneezes, the vulnerable, or those parishioners that may feel uncomfortable about shaking hands at the Sign of Peace, may wish to exchange the Peace of Christ with a smile or a bow, and should be encouraged to do so.
- **Public and Congregation Awareness:** The preventative measures should be appropriately communicated to the congregation and broader community. There is a government campaign on hygiene and posters can be downloaded at <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/wash-your-hands-regularly-poster> and placed in Parishes as a reminder that we can help prevent the spread of the virus with the practice of good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene.

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
Archbishop of Melbourne



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The above information is provided by way of general good practice, and is not something that needs to increase alarm in our congregations. A key point is to reassure and encourage the faithful – perhaps before Mass starts. I understand that CEM is also working closely with Principals and school communities in this regard.

The Victorian and Federal Government has issued guidance for the public and this remains the best source of advice. Further information and the latest advice can be obtained from the Australian Government's Department of Health at <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>.

These initial measures are being implemented to provide a response that is proportionate to the level of risk and to reduce risk to vulnerable people. The measures are temporary and will be reviewed in 7 days.

I encourage parishes to pray for those infected by the novel coronavirus around the world and for those working to treat them; for health specialists and authorities seeking to disrupt the spread of the virus; and for all that are experiencing apprehension during this period of uncertainty to "*cast your anxieties on God, as he cares for you.*" (1 Peter 5:7).

Yours sincerely in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter A. Comensoli', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
Archbishop of Melbourne