



**Diocese of Plymouth**  
**From the Office of the Bishop**

Dear Father

5<sup>th</sup> March 2020

**Re: Updated Coronavirus Guidance**

At least two of our deaneries have had confirmed cases of Covid-19 and it would seem, therefore, that the Coronavirus is circulating in our communities. Given this new reality, we are arriving at Stage 2 of the Bishop's Conference advice. I would, therefore, ask us all to take the following measures, where possible.

All priests, deacons, altar servers and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should wash their hands before Mass begins and use an alcohol-based, anti-bacterial solution before and after distributing Holy Communion.

- Please discern how to do this best, whilst maintaining the reverence of the Mass
- Ensure all vessels used at Mass, once purified, are thoroughly washed with soap and hot water after each use.

**During all Masses and liturgies:**

- Refrain from physical contact during the Sign of Peace (note: the Sign of Peace can be exchanged without physical contact)
- Refrain from distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful via the Chalice
- Given the frequency of direct contact with saliva in the distribution of Holy Communion on the tongue, every consideration should be given by each individual to receive Holy Communion reverently on the hand, for the time being
- Refrain from holding hands during the Lord's Prayer
- Refrain from Holy Water fonts

Faithful who are sick or are experiencing symptoms of sickness are not obliged to attend Mass, and out of charity they ought not to attend. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraph 2181* allows for this, for serious reasons, like illness.

I thank you for your cooperation. Please make this letter available to the people, by reproducing it and distributing it with the Newsletter, placing a copy on your webpage, and on parish noticeboards. Let us keep the sick and our health-care professionals very much in our prayers at this time.

Yours devotedly

Rt Rev Mark O'Toole  
Bishop of Plymouth