
The Bishops' Office

Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles

February 26, 2020



My siblings in Christ:

Lenten blessings.

As you may know, I recently returned from nearly two weeks in South Korea and Taiwan. Bishop Taylor asked me to share with colleagues and the whole diocese my experience of how churches close to the epicenter are handling the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak. These are guidelines for us all to follow – at church, at home, and at work -- as concern grows about the possibility of further outbreaks in the United States:

1. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. All the time. All day long. Many of you may know that before I celebrate Holy Eucharist, I always find a sink and wash my hands with soap and water. Especially now, this is a good precaution for the celebrant so people can know the church is taking this situation seriously.
2. Alcohol-based liquid hand sanitizer should be used by anyone distributing communion bread and wine.
3. In both Korea and Taiwan, intinction was preferred to drinking from the common cup. Many received the bread and acknowledged the cup with a bow as it came by. This is a good moment to remember a core principle of our Eucharistic theology: That the sacrament is complete when administered in just one kind (in this case, the consecrated bread).
4. At the peace, people bowed to one another or waved and said “Peace be with you” to their neighbors. No handshakes or hugging.

5. *At all times, avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth* – the places germs enter the body.
6. When you cough, cough into your bent elbow, not into your hand. If you have to blow your nose, dispose of the tissue as soon as possible in a waste container with a lid that closes and either wash your hands immediately or use an alcohol-based liquid to sanitize your hands.
7. Keep your distance. We don't have to be in each other's faces to talk. This is particularly important if someone is coughing or sneezing.
8. Try to avoid large crowds, especially where you will be cramped or pushed together. I know this is hard for people who commute on buses or trains.
9. Whenever possible, use Zoom, GoToMeeting, or Skype for meetings.
10. *If you're sick, stay home!* Encourage others to stay home if they're sick. Don't hesitate to go to the doctor and to urge others to do so.
11. Create systems for wellness checks in the congregation, especially older people whom you haven't seen for a while.
12. If your congregation has a food ministry, follow the World Health Organization's recommendations regarding food safety.

Up-to-date information is a good antidote for anxiety. Visit the website of the World Health Organization for frequent updates. Go to the page below and click "Protect Yourself" to find downloadable materials in Chinese, English, Spanish, and other languages as well as information about how to deal with anxiety over the disease: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

The biggest lessons from my Asia visit are to use common sense, don't be anxious, get plenty of rest, and eat as healthily as you can.

Holy and gracious God, give us the strength to meet the health crisis looming around us. Enlighten researchers that they may discover the right vaccine against this disease. Guide the doctors, nurses and all medical technicians working with those who are infected to take correct actions for their care. Protect all medical staff and family or friends caring for those who are ill. Bring together the governments and governmental agencies around the world to work together to eradicate this health threat. All this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Yours in Christ,

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