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Diocese of Santa Rosa

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Memo: To all Pastors and Parochial Administrators
FROM: Bishop Robert F. Vasa
Re: Health Concerns related to Coronavirus
Date: February 28, 2020

In light of the presence of this virus in Solano County, it is prudent to implement more stringent policies in our Parishes regarding hygiene.

A. Fundamentals that always apply:

- we urge priests, deacons, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to practice good hygiene, washing their hands before Mass begins or even using an alcohol based anti-bacterial solution before and after distributing Holy Communion;
- assuring the faithful that if they are sick or are experiencing symptoms of sickness, they are not obliged to attend Mass, and even that out of charity they ought not to attend.

B. Additional precautionary measures that should be applied:

- The practice of people holding hands during the Our Father with non-family members is to be discouraged;
- the exchange of the sign of peace is to be suspended (or the faithful instructed that it be exchanged without physical contact);
- **In the Diocese of Santa Rosa:** The distribution of Holy Communion from the Chalice is to be suspended until the danger of the present virus is eliminated.

C. In the event that the threat becomes dire, as could happen in any of our communities, the Diocese will consider granting a general dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. In cases of an actual major outbreak of the virus it is even conceivable that public celebrations of the liturgy, including Mass could be suspended. The people should be apprised of this possibility.

D. Any pastor is authorized to grant to any individual who has fears or anxieties, or who is in an otherwise compromised health condition, a dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass.

E. Greater care should be taken regarding the sanitation of Holy Water fonts. At a minimum, additional sanitizer pump stations near the fonts is recommended.

F. Schools need to be especially vigilant regarding the potential presence or spread of this virus in their school communities.

NOTE: Some of these recommendations come from the **USCCB**.