

## OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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## DIOCESE OF GRAND FALLS

March 4, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Understandably, people are always concerned during 'cold and flu season' about the transmission of viruses during our parish gathering and, in particular, our celebrations of the Eucharist. These concerns are now magnified given the worldwide fears about COVID-19 (Corona Virus).

As Catholics, we have an ancient context from which to consider our current situation. I remind you that illness has always been a legitimate reason for missing Sunday Mass. This tradition is not only to aid the recovery of the ill, but to protect the health of the community.

Two aspects of our Liturgy deserve our attention.

**The Sign of Peace** - Our custom of shaking hands at the Sign of Peace is potentially a way virus can be spread. Some have suggested that we suspend the Sign of Peace, but the Sign of Peace cannot be eliminated from the Liturgy. Some have suggested waving to each other or bumping elbows instead of shaking hands, but the sign we exchange should be dignified. Therefore, during this time of heightened concern about the spread of Colds and Flu, and until there is a greater understanding of the potential spread of the COVID-19, a 'respectful bow' to those who are near to us will be the sign we exchange in our parishes.

**Communion from the Chalice** – During the outbreak of SARS in 2003, the Canadian Bishops gave consideration to eliminating receiving Communion from the Chalice however, after study and deliberation, the decision was made to continue to offer parishioners Communion from the Chalice but informing people of several important considerations. First, I remind people that if they are ill, you should not receive from the Chalice until you know you are no longer contagious. Second, I remind our parishioners that if you have any concern/fear receiving Communion from the Chalice you are free to choose not to receive Communion from the Chalice. Finally, I remind all Extraordinary

Ministers of Holy Communion that if you are ill you should not distribute Communion – either the Host or from the Chalice – and if any Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion yourselves have concerns/fears of consuming the residual Communion or by purifying the Chalice, you should feel free to decline to distribute Communion.

It may be necessary to update this information or amend our Liturgical practices as we learn more. But for now, common sense, good hygiene and sensitivity to those around us should be our focus.

Finally, we pray to our Divine Healer for those who are sick, and we pray also for all health care workers, that Jesus will lovingly watch over us.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and followed by the name "R. Anthony Daniels" in a cursive script.

Most Reverend R. Anthony Daniels  
Bishop of Grand Falls