

## CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION

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March 11, 2020

Dear Parishioners:

As I mentioned in last Sunday's letter, when it comes to dealing with the COVID-19 (Coronavirus), we have to be prayerful and sensible to ensure the health of all. Bishop Caggiano issued important directives for parishes in light of the fact that the virus has been identified within the Diocese of Bridgeport. Therefore, effective immediately, we are implementing the following **directives for Mass** at the Church of the Assumption Parish:

1. All Masses, confessions, and other devotional and liturgical services scheduled for the church **REMAIN** as scheduled.
2. The offering of the Precious Blood will continue to be suspended **indefinitely**. A reminder to those who have gluten allergies and therefore would receive the Precious Blood only: gluten-free hosts are available. Kindly inform the priest or deacon of the Mass that you wish to receive a gluten-free host and he will instruct you about where to receive.
3. The exchange of the Sign of Peace will be suspended.
4. If it is your practice to hold hands during the recitation of the Our Father, kindly refrain from doing so.
5. Holy water fonts will be emptied and sanitized.
6. We will ensure that handrails, restrooms, door handles and the tops of pews will be sanitized. Hand sanitizer will be available near the church entrances.
7. Clergy and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion will purify their hands with sanitizer before and after distributing the Eucharist.
8. We strongly recommend that communicants receive the Host in their hands and not on the tongue.
9. If you have come in contact with someone in the last 14 days who has subsequently developed flu-like symptoms, please refrain from receiving Holy Communion. Instead, as is the practice of the Church, one can make an Act of Spiritual Communion at the time others are receiving. The Act can be a simple prayer such as ***“My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament, I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.”***

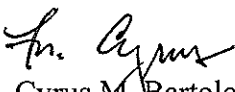
10. If you are exhibiting flu-like or cold symptoms you are not obliged to attend Sunday Mass. In fact, until there is more information about the Coronavirus and its spread, one should out of charity avoid public events if experiencing such symptoms. Also, the elderly and those with underlying physical conditions that would make them more susceptible to the Coronavirus are not obliged to attend Sunday Mass. Sunday and Weekday Mass televised on Catholic networks like EWTN and Catholic Faith Network (CFN) and also WTNH in CT. Their websites provide the Mass times.

Bishop Caggiano has also strongly recommended that we postpone non-liturgical events in the immediate weeks ahead, especially those at which the elderly and other vulnerable persons may be inclined to participate. I have consulted with parish medical experts about holding parish meetings and events, and their advice has informed my decisions. As important and life-giving as some of these events can be for a parish, looking out for the well-being of others is of primary concern. With that in mind, we are implementing the following directives regarding **non-liturgical parish events at the Church of the Assumption:**

1. The following parish events are **postponed**. If appropriate, meetings (such as Mary's Mantle, Book Group, etc.) can be held via teleconference or other virtual platforms.
2. Religious Education Classes (all levels) are suspended until further notice.
3. Ministry leaders are encouraged to hold their meetings via teleconference, Zoom, or other virtual platforms.
4. Clergy will not visit the hospital unless there is an emergency to which the hospital chaplain cannot attend.
5. At the recommendation of the Department of Public Health, clergy and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion will not visit the homebound or those in care facilities until further notice. We recommend that ministers stay in touch with those whom they visit regularly so that we can remain apprised of any needs. As with hospitals, in the case of an emergency, a priest will visit.

I realize that these changes, although temporary, may be upsetting to some; but as the bishop has indicated, we must take care of one another. Let us pray to our patron, the Blessed Virgin Mary to help and protect us always.

Yours in Christ,

  
Fr. Cyrus M. Bartolome  
Pastor