

Revised Pastoral Guidelines
in connection with the Spread of
Novel Coronavirus Infection (Wuhan Coronavirus Infection)
(27 January 2020)

With further outbreak of the *Novel Coronavirus Infection* in Mainland China, Hong Kong and other regions, the government now treats the new viral epidemic as an *emergency* (a most critical situation) and not just as a *serious situation*. Accordingly the Chancery Office and the Diocesan Liturgy Commission, after consultation with medical professionals and taking into account the contingency measures of the government, have laid down the following revised pastoral guidelines in place of those announced on 23 January 2020. All clergy, liturgical ministers and the faithful are required to observe these guidelines, with a view to safeguarding the common good and preventing, as far as possible, the wider spread of the epidemic in our local communities.

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1. Hygiene within the Church Premises

- 1.1 Keep doors and windows open for the maintenance of good ventilation. Where necessary, improve ventilation by means of electric fans and air-conditioning facilities.
- 1.2 Regularly cleanse and disinfect the Church floor, furniture such as prie dieux, the Reconciliation Room, especially the screen, and the toilets.
- 1.3 The faithful should put on a self-provided mask before entering a church. While leaving the church, they should not throw the used masks and paper tissues at random.
- 1.4 Priests officiating at mass or other liturgical functions, as well as the priests and deacons assisting, should wear surgical masks.

2. Mass

- 2.1 For their own safety and that of others, members of the faithful who feel unwell, or show respiratory symptoms (such as coughing, difficulty in breathing, or fever), or have been to regions affected by the the *Novel Coronavirus Infection* within fourteen days, or have been in contact with people suspected to be infected, are not obliged to attend Mass on Sunday. However, they should practise instead other forms of piety, such as reading Scripture, saying the rosary or other prayers.

Liturgical ministers (including priests, deacons, altar servers, readers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and ushers, etc.) who are or have been under similar circumstances should refrain from officiating or serving at Mass.
- 2.2 As a temporary measure, abstain from providing holy water at the Church entrance, so that the faithful need not use holy water.

- 2.3 The practice of individual faithful placing small bread into the ciborium before Mass should be suspended for the time being.
- 2.4 Liturgy booklets and hymnals in the church, being repeatedly used by members of the faithful, easily become agents for transmitting virus. Thus churches should set them apart for the time being. Projectors can be used to assist the congregation in following the liturgical texts. Readers may use their personal copies or photocopies of the liturgy booklets, while the congregation listen attentively. Choir members on their part may use their hymnals. Projectors can also be used in place of hymnals; or hymns familiar to the congregations can be sung instead..
- 2.5 Readers and commentators should wear surgical masks while carrying out their duties during the liturgy. The microphone equipment in all its forms should be cleansed after Mass. (Alcohol may be used.)
- 2.6 To keep their hands hygienic, Sunday collections should be taken up from the faithful during the “Parish Announcements”.
- 2.7 Before, during and after consecration, the bread and wine should be covered with purificators until Communion time. These purificators should be changed after each Mass and washed before reuse.
- 2.8 As a temporary measure, give Holy Communion under one species only, the Host, and do not give the Blood of Christ.
- 2.9 As a temporary measure, all members of the faithful are to receive Holy Communion only in the hand, and not by the traditional method. They should cleanse their hands in an appropriate way before receiving Holy Communion.
When they remove the mask in order to consume the Host, their fingers might touch the outer surface of the mask, and so, after consuming the Host, it is recommended that they disinfect their hands in an appropriate way.
- 2.10 All priests and Eucharistic ministers should individually wash their hands properly (using, for example, alcohol or antiseptic) before giving Holy Communion. After giving Holy Communion, it is recommended that they cleanse their hands in an appropriate way.
- 2.11 To avoid their saliva from being transmitted to communicants, priests and Eucharistic ministers are advised to give Holy Communion to the faithful first, before they themselves receive Holy Communion.
- 2.12 All priests and Eucharistic ministers are advised to wear surgical masks while giving Holy Communion. They may omit saying “The Body of Christ”, and the communicants may omit responding “Amen”.
- 2.13 Priests and Eucharistic ministers should place the small hosts gently in the hands of the communicants, but should avoid touching their hands as far as possible.
- 2.14 If by chance a consecrated host drops onto the floor, it should be picked up by a Eucharistic minister who stands by, to be disposed of properly afterwards, without being given to any faithful.

2.15 Take care of hygiene in cleansing chalices -

- a. The minister who consumes the Blood of Christ should himself cleanse the chalice with water and drink it. He should not ask someone else to do it for himself.
- b. The chalice should then be washed with tap water before reuse.
- c. Purificators should be changed after each Mass and washed before reuse.

2.16 Reduce unnecessary contact, thus -

- a. While saying or singing the Our Father, do not hold hands.
- b. Express the Sign of Peace by bowing heads, instead of shaking hands.
- c. As a temporary measure, omit the blessing of children.

2.17 All liturgical ministers should wash their hands before and after the Liturgy. Their liturgical vestments and other uniforms should be washed more regularly.

3. Visitation, Anointing and Giving Holy Communion to the Sick and the Elderly

- 3.1 As a temporary measure, Eucharistic ministers and visitors should abstain from visiting or giving Holy Communion to the sick in the hospitals or the elderly at home or in the homes for the aged. If it is deemed necessary to go, the minister or visitor should consult the Parish Priest. (Note: At present all hospitals have cautioned against day-to-day visits.)
- 3.2 If a priest is obliged to visit a sick person (for example, for anointing or giving viaticum), he should wear a surgical mask, and should consult beforehand the matron of the ward concerned, so as to comply with the directions of the hospital. Before leaving the ward, he should wash his hands with antiseptic.
- 3.3 All should wash their hands after visitation or giving Holy Communion to the sick.
- 3.4 Priests should use “specially designed oil stocks” (like the mini plastic boxes for keeping medicine), which are either provided by the office of the Diocesan Liturgy Commission or the Pastoral Care Units in hospitals, or self-provided. They should moisten some cotton or tissue with holy oil and keep it in a stock, which should be used only once for a specific patient. The oil stock should immediately be disposed of after use, or cleansed thoroughly for future reuse.

The pyx should likewise be cleansed immediately after giving Holy Communion to avoid infection.

4. Reconciliation

A priest must wear a surgical mask while hearing confessions. A penitent must at least put on a mask. Confessionals and reconciliation rooms with no ventilation should not be used for the time being. Instead, the best alternative would be “face-to-face” confessions at a venue with fresh air and ventilation.

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5. Others

- 5.1 Taking into account the concrete circumstances, parishes should consider cancelling functions (e.g., banquet) in which large groups of the faithful are gathered within a restrictive area, and such activities as home visits.

As long as the viral epidemic persists, the relevant guidelines of the Education Bureau can serve for reference in deciding whether or not activities for children (such as Sunday School) or for teenagers can be held.

- 5.2 Alert the faithful on the need to maintain good personal and public hygiene.
- 5.3 Refer to the information provided by the Centre for Health Protection on the proper use of masks; link: https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/use_mask_properly.pdf

Take note of latest information on the website of the Department of Health.

- 5.4 Take note of any latest guidelines from the Diocese.

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Cardinal John Tong urges all the faithful to do their utmost, through prayers and the practice of the virtues of faith, hope and love, to join the government and the general public in combating the new viral epidemic.



Rev. Lawrence Lee
Chancellor
27 January 2020