



ST. FRANCIS XAVIER  
MISSOULA'S JESUIT PARISH

**Re: Responding to (COVID-19)**

Dear St. Francis Xavier Community:

Given the rising concern about the coronavirus (COVID-19), and the recent declaration of a state of emergency nationwide, I wanted to write to our community regarding our current policies and approaches.

• **How is the Virus Spread:** Currently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that the disease is spread via **respiratory droplets**, when an infected person sneezes or coughs, or between people who are in close contact with each other where one is infected. Though, at the current time, it is not possible, without testing, to know if one has COVID-19, and one may be contagious, it seems, even while asymptomatic, I am asking that we might all engage in ordinary cautions:

1. **Please stay at home if you have a fever (above 99.6), or have a persistent cough, or difficulty breathing (*ONE IS NOT BOUND BY SUNDAY OBLIGATIONS IF ONE IS ILL, AND ONE CAN HELP SERVE THE GREATER GOOD BY BEING CAUTIOUS FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS*);**
2. **Wash your hands with soap and water frequently and thoroughly, for at least 30 seconds (a common trick is to sing happy birthday, at a normal pace, while washing, and that should give you the required time); if soap and water is not available, use sanitizer over your whole hands, including fingers and nails;**
3. **Avoid touching your own eyes, mouth, or nose, especially when in close contact with others. This will prevent transmission both to other and from others to you;**
4. **Cover your mouth and nose with a sleeve or tissue whenever you cough or sneeze.**
5. **For updates, please check the CDC site:**  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html>

• **What About St. Francis Xavier?** Bishop Vetter has not authorized any variations to the celebration of the Liturgy. However, he is encouraging parishioners and parish staffs to practice good hygiene and common sense. At our three houses of worship, we are making these recommendations out of an abundance of caution. While, at the current time, we are not planning on suspending any events, it is important that we be prudent and protect the community. Therefore, we are activating the following procedures:

1. **If you are sick, or feeling you might be getting sick, stay at home and do not attend Mass. *Missing Mass due to illness: – you are not obliged to attend.*** Bishop Vetter was clear that, out of charity, one ought not attend while sick.
2. **Hands-Free:** We are asking all members of the community to refrain from holding hands during the Lord's Prayer, and to offer a word of peace—not a handshake— during the Sign of Peace. Also, Ushers have been asked to refrain from shaking hands as people enter and leave the church—a kind



ST. FRANCIS XAVIER  
MISSOULA'S JESUIT PARISH

**word and smile will remind us we are welcome. We will be draining all the Holy Water Fonts, until further notice.**

- 3. Sanitizer and Hand Washing: We will be sure that there is sufficient soap in the rest rooms and offer sanitizer at each of the doors. Although washing with soap and water is best, we encourage all to sanitize their hands as they enter and leave the church.**
- 4. All Eucharistic ministers are instructed to clean their hands before and after distributing the Blessed Sacrament, not to touch head or hands during blessings, and to wash vessels with hot water and soap following liturgy.**
- 5. Receiving Communion: St. Francis Xavier will suspend distribution of the Precious Blood until we pass the current period of infection. Though this is a sadness, we know that the fullness of Christ comes to us through either species. Also, all are asked to receive the Eucharist in their hands, and not on the tongue.**

*If you or someone in your family does happen to contract the coronavirus, please let the Parish know as soon as possible, so that we can support you and inform others; and also know that the other Jesuits and I are ready to come to bring the Sacrament of the Sick to anyone who desires the prayer of the Church.*

In all of these matters, prudence and caution are important; but let us also recall that they are not the highest of Christian values. We must not allow fear to keep us from respect and love for one another. So, let us be cautious for the sake of others, especially the most vulnerable, but not so cautious that we cause suffering to others. Let us not presume— that some of our sisters or brothers are to be avoided out of fear or prejudice, but let us be, as Christ always was, compassionate to all, especially, for those most fragile.

Above all these things, let us remember that Christ our beloved walks with us. As we use the wisdom God has given us, let us also pray in the assurance that his love for us is unyielding. If you have any suggestions or comments on our policies, please feel free to contact me.

Your brother in Christ,

Joseph P. Carver, S.J.  
Pastor – St. Francis Xavier