




THE CHANCERY
OFFICE OF THE VICAR GENERAL
ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK

MEMORANDUM

To: Brother Priests and Permanent Deacons

From: Father LaMorte 

Date: March 23, 2020

Subject: Coronavirus XV

As events and guidelines continue to unfold, and in keeping with the civil requirements for physical distancing, the following health and safety measures are to be observed in all the parishes and institutions within the archdiocese, effective today. If you receive criticism from your parishioners, convey to them that you are not refusing to honor their requests, but that it is the directive of the archdiocese and you are required to follow it.

The policies delineated herein supersede and replace all other norms issued March 15, 2020 under my heading regarding the celebration of the sacraments and rites of the Church.

1. Baptisms administered by the ordinary minister of the sacrament within the parish setting are to be deferred, except in case of emergency. In these extreme instances, the faithful should contact a priest immediately.
2. Funeral Masses or services in the church or funeral home will no longer be conducted until further notice. Limiting the funerals to ten people has proven not to be feasible and caused problems for many priests. Burial prayers may be said in an open air setting in a cemetery, as long as proper distancing of the ten people allowed by state regulation is maintained. They may not be held in a mortuary chapel. The family is to be assured that a memorial Mass will be offered as soon as possible after restrictions are lifted.

3. Weddings are not allowed, unless absolutely necessary. If a wedding must take place for some serious reason, only the bride, groom, two witnesses and the officiant may be present, all maintaining the proper physical distance. Permission to celebrate a wedding must be obtained from the office of the vicar general. During this period of remote working from home, call 212.688.7954 or email vg@archny.org.
4. Individual confession may be offered upon request, as long as hygiene and physical distancing requirements are observed (i.e., a barrier between the penitent and the priest, such as a grille and cloth). The use of Chapter II and Chapter III of the *Rite of Penance* is not permitted as this, by necessity, requires the gathering of people in our churches.
5. Holy Communion may be administered as viaticum only. The minister of communion must observe the safety protocols dictated by the civil authorities for the prevention of the spread of infection. Masses in convents will no longer be celebrated. The pastor or parochial vicar may consecrate a sufficient supply of hosts for the chapel tabernacle. One of the sisters may be mandated as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. A proper ritual will be followed for the distribution of the Eucharist.
6. If a pastor chooses to keep the parish church open for prayer:
 - Definite hours must be announced.
 - No public ceremonies such as the Mass or group devotions may take place so as to prevent any assembling of people.
 - Exposition may take place, but there is to be no Benediction or group devotions.
 - The church must be cleaned and sanitized frequently in accord with the guidelines to prevent infection.
7. Parishes should suspend all office activity. Employees who provide essential services are permitted to carry out their duties according to the determination of the pastor. Monitor the telephone frequently for messages and be sure that an emergency number is given at the beginning of the greeting. Be certain that a priest can be reached in case of an urgent need for the sacrament of the anointing of the sick and viaticum.
8. Parishioners who are in hospitals will be attended to by the Catholic chaplain on staff.

WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE HAS CONTRACTED THE CORONAVIRUS

Priests have been calling in, seeking guidance on what to do if someone believes he has contracted the coronavirus and wishes to be tested.

Anyone who believes he has symptoms and wishes to be tested should contact ArchCare at its COVID-19 hotline (877-239-1998). ArchCare has allocated staff to handle inquiries and provide direction to archdiocesan clergy, religious and lay personnel and their families. An ArchCare Intake Specialist will answer all questions or route you to someone who can address your concerns.

Continue to check you emails for any future updates and any other new information of which we would like to make you aware.

"BEING CHURCH DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS: A WEBINAR FOR CLERGY"

You may be interested in a special webinar specifically aimed at clergy and pastoral ministers to examine key issues, concerns, best practices, and next steps in how Catholic Church leaders can continue accompany the faithful amidst the fears and isolation dominating parishioners and families during the COVID-19 crisis.

This webinar is sponsored by the [National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry](#). It will be held on Friday, March 27 from 4:00 to 5:00 PM. To register you may visit <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/2868972588785226253>