

In order to address concerns related to the Coronavirus and any potential for it to spread via liturgical celebrations, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany has issued guidelines for parishes and local Catholics. At this point, the Diocese considers the current status of concern to be Stage 1, meaning there are very few cases in United States and no known cases in local parishes. At this stage, in accordance with directives from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Diocese has made the following key recommendations to parishes:

- Assure the faithful that if they are sick or are experiencing symptoms of serious illness, they are not obliged to attend Sunday Mass, and, out of concern for others, ought not to attend.
- Ask anyone with cold or flu symptoms to refrain from the physical sign of peace, refrain from taking Communion from the chalice, and receive the host in the hand only. (This should be a matter of course during every flu season as well.)
- Ask everyone attending Mass to sanitize their hands as they come into church using sanitized gel dispensers. These should be made available at entrances.
- Ensure ministers of the Eucharist sanitize their hands before and after distributing Communion. This can be done by washing hands thoroughly (for 20 seconds at least with soap and water) before proceeding to the sanctuary or using good quality hand gel.
- Ensure regular cleaning of surfaces people touch regularly, including door handles.

These guidelines will be under continuous review, in keeping with updated recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and other health and governmental agencies. If the status of the virus changes, precautions will be updated via the diocesan website, parish bulletins and social media. Check rcda.org for updates. You can view the complete and detailed guidelines at www.rcda.org/coronavirus.