



Liturgical directives from Bishop Persico in light of flu season and the coronavirus, as of March 3, 2020

From the Bishop:

“The current flu season, coupled with the advance of coronavirus cases here in the United States, calls us to take responsible measures to put our people at ease in their worship and to work to prevent the spread of these diseases in our parishes, schools, and other institutions.

As a result, I am implementing the following liturgical directives for all Masses in the Diocese of Erie, effective immediately until further notice:

SIGN OF PEACE

The exchange of the sign of peace among the faithful is to be omitted.

- *The exchange of peace in the liturgy takes place verbally between the celebrant and the faithful, which remains in place.*
- *When appropriate, the deacon or priest may ordinarily opt to invite the people to exchange peace among themselves. It is this optional exchange among the faithful which is to be omitted. It is not to be adapted or altered – it is to be omitted.*

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

The distribution of the Body of Christ in the sacred host will continue as usual.

- *I encourage the faithful at this time to receive in the hand, but the right of each individual to receive on the tongue, as guaranteed by the universal law of the Church, remains in place and is to be respected.*

The distribution of the Precious Blood to the faithful is to be suspended.

- *We are mindful of the teaching of the Church that those who receive only the host nonetheless receive the whole Body, Blood, soul, and divinity of Christ.*
- *Out of concern for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who would otherwise need to consume what remains of the Precious Blood at the end of Communion, and to prevent any practices contrary to the proper reverence for the Holy Eucharist, only the priest (and deacon if present) will receive the Precious Blood.*
- *Under no circumstances is the Precious Blood to be poured into the sacrarium.*

GREETING BEFORE OR AFTER MASS

Celebrants who greet people must respect the right of individuals not to shake hands.

- *No one should take offense at someone who does not want to shake hands.*
- *Likewise, no one should feel obligated to use holy water upon entering or leaving the church.*

As the situation here in the Diocese of Erie changes, these liturgical directives may need to be amended. In the meantime, we pray for all the sick, and in particular for those suffering from the flu or from the coronavirus. We pray for the researchers trying to find a treatment, and we pray for those who are caring for the sick throughout the world.”