

Preventing and Preparing for COVID-19 in our St. Gabriel Parish Community

Updated 3/13/2020

While the risk factor for the 2019 Coronavirus (COVID-19) in El Paso County continues to be low, the diocese and the state are taking strong measures to prevent the spread of the virus. We are receiving trusted direction from Bishop Sheridan and the USCCB Committee on Divine Worship, El Paso County Public Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

This is a summary of the procedures St. Gabriel is doing to care for all members of our community, especially the elderly and the vulnerable, based on guidance from the CDC.

Prevention strategies implemented by parish clergy, staff and the Health & Safety Committee:

- **At the direction of Bishop Sheridan, all public Masses (including daily Mass) have been cancelled, March 13-31, 2020.**
- **In addition, all non-liturgical activities are cancelled for the same period (classes, Bible studies, etc.).**
- **Information on Confession will soon follow.**
- **When one cannot attend the Mass, it is a good practice to spend time reflecting on the Scripture readings, watching a Mass on TV/Internet, and making an [Act of Spiritual Communion](#).**
- **Communion to the Homebound ceases immediately, over that same period.**
- **However, Anointing of the Sick for those near the point of death may still be requested.**
- **Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will also be suspended during this period.**
- **The parish office will remain open, Monday – Friday, 9:00AM – 5:00 PM.**
- CDC handwashing instructions have been posted near sinks.
- Additional hand sanitizer stations have been added in the narthex, rear entrance (near the drinking fountain), sacristy and office.
- Improved hygiene instruction has been given to clergy, sacristans, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC), ushers and altar servers, for when Mass resumes.
- Instructions have been given to EMHC to slow transmission of the virus, minimizing physical contact during distribution of Holy Communion, for when Mass resumes.
- Cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (pews, door handles, light switches, drinking fountains, toilets, faucets, sinks and Holy Water fonts) will continue on a daily basis.
- Information will be posted on the parish website, containing links and policies.

Best-Practices we should follow:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap & hot water, especially before and after attending Mass.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer, if you cannot wash your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Discard the tissue and wash your hands immediately.
- Sanitize personal items regularly, especially cell phones.
- Avoid close contact (stay 6 feet away, if possible) with other people if they show any symptoms.
- When Mass resumes, if you are sick or have been advised by a doctor to avoid gatherings (especially if you fall into the high-risk category), you will not be obliged to attend Mass, **and there is no sin in this decision.**
- **Further, out of charity, a sick person ought not attend Mass.**
- Older adults and people who have severe underlying chronic medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness. People who are at higher risk are encouraged to avoid crowds as much as possible.
- **When one cannot attend the Mass, it is a good practice to spend time reflecting on the Scripture readings, watching a Mass on TV/Internet, and making an [Act of Spiritual Communion](#). (continued on next page)**

On-going actions by Staff and Health & Safety Committee:

- We continue to update the parish Emergency Response Plan that will include a kit for on-site illness (should it occur), quarantine, and sanitizing procedures.
- We are implementing plans for modifying parish services, as all activities have been cancelled.
- Faith Formation is developing plans for on-going catechesis, if needed.
- We are heightening our awareness of the needs of the elderly, isolated and sick, and how the parish can respond to their needs. Parishioners are encouraged to communicate to the parish office when they are aware of these people in need.
- We are planning to continue essential services if on-site operations are scaled back temporarily.
- It is important to refrain from stigmatizing individuals or discriminating in our community, should an outbreak occur.
- We are encouraging greater attention to prayer in this situation, both locally and world-wide.

Continued Communications:

We will continue to update our communications to you as this situation develops, to deliver timely and accurate information. Parishioners are encouraged to use the following methods:

- Consult the parish website: saintgabriel.net.
- Please consider signing up for the Parish Blast (email) or Flocknote (text), for real-time closings/cancellations, and general parish information. Contact the parish office at 528-8407 for more information.
- Contact the parish office if you have any concerns or questions, 528-8407.

COVID-19 Readiness Resources:

- Visit [cdc.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19) for the latest information and resources about COVID-19
- COVID 2019 Situation Summary <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html>
- Prevention and Treatment <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html>
- Pregnant Women and COVID-19 FAQs <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/pregnancy-faq.html>
- FAQs: Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) and Children <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/children-faq.html>
- Stigma Related to COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/related-stigma.html>
- Handwashing: A Family Activity <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/handwashing-family.html>
- Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives <http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing>
- Act of Spiritual Communion: <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/devotions/act-of-spiritual-communion-339>