

**PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDELINES FOR THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SINGAPORE
DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK**

by the
Archdiocesan COVID-19 Taskforce
in consultation with the
Catholic Medical Guild of Singapore

[Updated 4 March 2020, in DORSCON Orange]

MANAGING RISKS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE

The COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 19) outbreak has been designated by the World Health Organization as a public health emergency of international concern. Caused by a coronavirus known as SARS-CoV-2 first reported in Wuhan, China, COVID-19 is now circulating in many cities, including Singapore, and the illness may range from mild respiratory symptoms to severe pneumonia.

There is a need for a concerted effort by all to help contain or limit spread of any infection. But life must go on, and the Church has a responsibility to continue ministering to the faithful.

Hence, an Archdiocesan Task Force is preparing for the “new normal” in Church when suspension of public worship is lifted.

In alignment with Ministry of Health advisories, we recommend non-essential large-scale events to be cancelled or deferred. For essential large-scale events, e.g.

Masses, the following precautionary measures should be observed:

1. Remind participants not to attend the event if they are unwell;
2. Perform temperature screening and look out for respiratory symptoms (i.e. cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, runny nose) amongst participants;
3. Deny entry to unwell participants;
4. Maintain a registration list of participants for contact tracing;
5. Increase the frequency of cleaning of commonly used areas.

General health advisory

Parishioners must adopt the following precautions at all times:

1. Observe good personal hygiene and sanitary practices at all times.
2. Practice frequent hand washing with soap.
3. Avoid touching your face with your hands as much as possible.
4. Cover your mouth with a tissue paper when coughing or sneezing and dispose the soiled tissue paper in the rubbish bin as soon as possible. Do not leave used tissue paper in the pews.
5. Seek medical attention promptly if you are feeling unwell.
6. Stay home and avoid social gatherings if you are sick.
7. Keep yourself updated on the changing disease situation.

For more information, please refer to: <https://www.moh.gov.sg/covid-19>

Considerations Before Attending Church

While we all need pastoral care and spiritual formation, we also have a calling by Christ to love and care for one another. Deciding not to attend Mass and Church events when unwell or 'feeling under the weather' (which may be a prodrome, an early indication of onset of an illness) will be the most charitable course of action during the COVID-19 outbreak. The sick are exempted from the Sunday obligation.

Attending Mass

Any person who feels unwell at anytime during Mass must leave immediately.

Holy water will not be available in fonts at entrances of churches as this could be a vehicle for infection.

Make alcohol-based hand sanitisers available near entrances of churches and confessionals.

Missals, hymnals and other "high touch" items are not to be distributed at Mass, to reduce the risk of contamination of shared items. Individuals who bring their own missals to church may continue using them.

Avoid holding of hands and shaking hands during Mass.

Holy Communion

Priests and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion do not need to wear surgical masks while distributing Holy Communion. Those who are feeling unwell should not be distributing Holy Communion.

Holy Communion is to be received only on the hand till further notice. Holy Communion from the Chalice is to be suspended until further notice.

Priests and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are to wash their hands with soap and water or sanitise their hands with alcohol-based hand sanitisers before and after distributing Holy Communion.