



Dear People, Neighbors & Friends:

Two Rhode Islanders who recently returned from a field trip to Europe from Saint Raphael Academy, of Pawtucket, have tested "presumptive positive" for coronavirus, while a third person from the trip is being tested.

The Bishop has recommended that we all exercise extreme caution. Accordingly, in consultation with John Lord and Stephanie Shoemaker, we have decided to offer Evening Prayer, Low Mass, and Stations of the Cross in the church as usual on Wednesdays in Lent but to postpone the Lenten suppers until further notice. If later in Lent we are advised by the diocese precautionary measures, based on [CDC guidelines](#), are no longer necessary, we will be happy and relieved to reinstate all canceled activities.

While I am not an alarmist, particularly given this morning's news, I do not believe the Centers for Disease Control is being over-cautious given the virulence of both the domestic flu currently making its rounds in the general population as well as the global situation now directly affecting Rhode Islanders.

As a community of faith, we live in hope, not fear, but we are also mindful of our responsibility to each other and the wider community to act prudently with the good of both the body and the soul in mind.

Accordingly, I encourage everyone who is not feeling ill to resolve to observe a holy Lent by faithful attendance at public worship on Sundays and as scheduled on weekdays. Heaven knows, our pews are not so crowded as to prevent those who wish to maintain six feet of distance from others to do so!

Yesterday, we observed the first Sunday in Lent with good attendance at both services, and the people were well spread out in the church. We did not have Coffee Hour, which felt very penitential indeed. I am trying to think of ways to encourage fellowship after Mass so that we don't all simply flee home. If anyone would like to volunteer to help with executing a more "Sanitary & Lenten Fellowship Hour" following Mass, please be in touch with me before Friday this week.

Meanwhile, remember to wash your hands frequently, avoid touching your face with unwashed hands, and if you must cough or sneeze, for God's sake and for ours, please do it into the crook of your elbow. (I will regard the failure to do so as a mortal sin requiring confession!)

In the final analysis, after reviewing official guidance from a number of sources, I do not regard the current situation as sufficient cause for neglecting a fully faithful preparation for Easter. So unless you are ill, please make a point to come to church so

that we can together worship God in the beauty of holiness, keep Lent as the Church intends, and thereby publicly give an account of the hope that is in us, regardless of the chances and changes of this mortal life.

Until further notice, at least, I look forward to seeing you in church! And I do hope you will come to our Lenten devotions this Wednesday from 5:30-7:00 p.m.

Yours in Christ's service,
N.J.A. Humphrey+
XIV Rector

Prevention

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.
 - CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
 - Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for [health workers](#) and [people who are taking care of someone in close settings](#) (at home or in a health care facility).
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

For information about handwashing, see [CDC's Handwashing](#) website

For information specific to healthcare, see [CDC's Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings](#)

These are everyday habits that can help prevent the spread of several viruses. CDC does have [specific guidance for travelers](#).

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