

S.^TJAMIES' **Bicentenary 2019-2024**

Acting Rector Message to Parishioners re COVID-19

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you as we live through this holy season of Lent.

We have continued to closely monitor the information about the virus COVID-19 and, particularly, its effect on the health of people within our communities.

Over the past weeks various measures have been introduced in the parish to ensure that we are diligent in our safety practices out of concern for the well-being of the most vulnerable people among us.

As a result, we have provided hand sanitiser at the West Door and North Porch entry of the church and outside the Chapel of the Holy Spirit. The clergy, staff, vergers, servers, lay assistants and all who are preparing and serving food on behalf of our various hospitality teams are ensuring their hands are washed and are observing all hygiene recommendations.

We have asked that all people refrain from shaking hands and all other physical contact when greeting one another as they arrive at, or are leaving church. So too, at the sharing of the Greeting of Peace, where a simple bow with the verbal exchange of peace is the most responsible solution at this point.

It has long been a tradition of the church that the faithful may make the sign of the cross as they enter or leave the church, having dipped their fingers into the Font in the Baptistry or stoup at the entrance to the Chapel of the Holy Spirit. Both of these receptacles have been emptied for the immediate future. You may of course continue to make the outward sign of devotion without Holy Water.

We have made the decision to suspend for the time being, the sharing of the common cup at every celebration of the Eucharist, effective immediately. The presiding priest will consecrate both the bread and the wine, and receive in both kinds, the wine on behalf of all the faithful, but we will administer only the bread to the congregation. We will of course, according to the teachings of the church, be participating fully in the presence of Christ by this action.

Among other things, we at St. James' are a community of bread and wine, touching in peace, and gracious hospitality so these measures do run against our normal instincts and wishes. We pray that they will be in effect for only a short period of time. Please continue to pray for all of those suffering from the virus, those caring for them, and those ailing in other ways.

The Wardens (being responsible for our buildings, staff and volunteers) will be sending out a separate email with protocols and practical measures that we are taking, and will update these as new information comes to hand.

May the God of peace be with you all.

Fr John Stewart
Acting Rector

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