



Auxiliary Bishop of Perth

**Wednesday 4 March 2020**

**Statement from The Most Rev. Bishop Donald G. Sproxton DD VG  
on temporary Mass changes as a result of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

Dear Fathers, Deacons, sisters and brothers in the Lord.

The Western Australian and Federal Governments have issued public health advice in relation to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). The Archdiocese of Perth continues to be guided by this advice through our ongoing commitment to monitoring any threat posed by the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) to Catholic communities across our Archdiocese.

In my capacity as the Administrator of the Archdiocese of Perth, I am issuing the following directives (effective from today, Wednesday 4 March 2020) to all clergy, religious and the lay faithful across the Archdiocese of Perth. These preventative measures should be appropriately communicated to the congregation and the broader Catholic community.

The subsequent directives are temporary and are to remain in place until such time as Archbishop Costelloe SDB issues a revision to the following:

- Holy Water is to be removed from stoups in all Churches and Chapels.
- Offertory gifts are to be in closed vessels or, where this is not possible, vessels should be appropriately covered.
- The Sign of Peace is to be omitted at all Masses.
- The distribution of Holy Communion under both species is to cease.
- The Precious Blood is not to be shared from the chalice at any Masses and is reserved to the celebrant(s) only.
- Priests are to encourage communicants to receive the Sacred Host in the hand, not on the tongue.
- All priests and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are to wash their hands in soap and water, or are to use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser both immediately before and immediately after the distribution of Holy Communion.

All of the above precautionary directives are additional to our normal requirements that all sacred vessels are thoroughly washed before and after each Mass.

**Public Health Advice**

Additional information and access to daily health alerts can be obtained from the Australian Government's Department of Health: <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>

The Health Department of Western Australia has advised that travellers returning from overseas, and anyone feeling unwell, should;

1. Self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 (urinary tract or gastrointestinal symptoms)
2. Practice social distancing
  1. Avoid crowds and gatherings
  2. Maintain a distance of 1.5 meters between themselves and other people
3. Immediately isolate themselves if they become unwell (recommended treatment is paracetamol and oral fluids) and seek medical help.

**Congregational Awareness and Fulfilment of the Normal Obligation**

1. Parishioners who feel unwell should not attend Mass, and are excused from their normal obligation.
2. Parishioners who feel they may be at risk of infection if they go to Mass should refrain from attending Mass and are excused their normal obligation.
3. Priests and parishioners who attend Mass should practice good hygiene (cover mouths and noses when sneezing, coughing etc), refrain from touching their face or mouth, and refrain from shaking hands with others before or after Mass.

I encourage you to join with me in praying for all those who have passed away or who have been affected by coronavirus; for the women and men working tirelessly to care for those affected; and for the development of a vaccine.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Sproxton", preceded by a small cross symbol.

Most Rev. Donald G. Sproxton DD VG  
**Administrator**  
**Catholic Archdiocese of Perth**