

Good morning,

This past week I joined a call for school district officials from around the state hosted by Governor Murphy and his staff. The governor and his commissioners gave an update on coronavirus response.

The Department of Health Commissioner provided a lot of information about coronavirus. The CDC and WHO indicate that children are not particularly vulnerable to the virus. Therefore, the risk is low. However, your schools should be reviewing emergency response plans in preparation. I have attached the latest information sheet from the NJ Department of Health.

The governor reiterated that good hygiene is important, including washing hands and properly cleaning surfaces. Hand sanitizers are useful, but not as good as washing with soap and water. Face masks do not offer protection from getting sick (only recommended if you are sick with the virus). You should meet with your custodian and/or cleaning folks to review their practices.

As you may know, the diocese released information regarding the virus. The Bishop outlined the following:

- As is practiced in so many of our parishes already, priests, deacons, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are urged to practice good hygiene, washing their hands and using anti-bacterial hand sanitizer before and after distributing Holy Communion.
- Any individual who is sick or has flu-like symptoms should not attend Mass or other Church gatherings. Mass is broadcast on several television channels and also livestreamed on the Cathedral's website: stfranciscathedral.org, so the sick can make a "spiritual communion" until they return to good health.
- The sign of peace should be exchanged without physical contact.
- Distribution of the Precious Blood of Christ from the chalice is to be suspended. Furthermore, no member of the faithful is obliged to receive the Body of Christ on the tongue; worthy, reverent reception by hand is preferred until otherwise notified.

The entire press release can be found here: <https://diometuchen.org/news/diocese-of-metuchen-takes-precautions-to-prevent-spread-of-covid-19>

If there are any questions or concerns regarding the Coronavirus, you can call the hotline 1-800-222-1222 which will bring you to the County Department of Health.

We offer our prayers to all who are affected by this virus.

Dr. Robert A. Lockwood
Superintendent of Schools
Diocese of Metuchen