

A Message from the Office of the Chancellor

Flu Precautions:

With the flu season upon us, after consulting with the senior priests, local medical experts, and following the lead of the United State Conference of Catholic Bishops, it seems prudent to remind us all to take renewed precautions to minimize the risk of spreading disease. You are strongly encouraged to follow these practices effective immediately and inform your congregations about them to prevent the spread of the influenza/flu.

PASTORS AND PARISH DIRECTORS

- Priests, Deacons, and Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist should use an alcohol-based hand gel just prior to distributing Holy Communion.
- Subject to their discretion, pastors may suspend the distribution of the cup at school Masses, i.e. communion under one species only.

§ Following each Mass, after the vessels have been ritually purified, the sacristans should wash the vessels with hot, soapy water, then towel dry them and put them away.

§ Provide hand sanitizing stations should be conveniently located at each entrance to the church.

PARISH COMMUNITY

- All should exercise prudence at pre-liturgical greetings, the Sign of Peace, and the Our Father. Please respect the will of others who may not wish to shake hands, or make other forms of physical contact. For example, a respectful bow at the Sign of Peace is sufficient. The same holds for holding hands during the Lord's Prayer.
- Reception of the host on the hand is the best way to reduce the possibility of flu virus transmission.
- Distribution of the Precious Blood from a common cup is optional, subject to the discretion of the pastor.
- Intinction (dipping the host into the Precious Blood) is not an option.
- If you feel ill, or have a family member who is ill within your household or if you have a compromised immune system you should refrain from receiving the precious blood from the common cup.

- While scientific evidence is inconclusive at this point, health professionals are recommending taking precautions when using holy water. Water from the fonts should not be ingested, nor should it enter the body via the eyes or nose. Holy water should be changed frequently.
- The Center for Disease Control reminds people to practice respiratory etiquette: cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough - into your sleeve NOT your hand. Wash hands frequently with soap and water, scrubbing for at least 30 seconds. Avoid transmission of mucus or bodily fluids if you suspect you may be infected, refrain from shaking hands, refrain from sharing a communion cup, and above all, **if you feel sick, do not come to places where you might infect others.**
- If you are in any way ill or suspect that you might be experiencing any infectious disease, you are not obligated to attend Sunday Mass. The CDC recommends that people with influenza like symptoms remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100 F – 137.8 C), or signs of a fever without the use of fever reducing medications. Normally this occurs 3-5 days after initial symptoms. Stay at home until you feel healthy. ***Missing Mass due to illness is not sinful and is a prudent decision.*** The virtue of charity, which encourages us to care for our brothers and sisters, would demand that we do what is in our power to prevent others from becoming ill. This is specifically the case when others who might not have the flu but may be medically fragile are present. It is a sign of respect to refrain from attending Mass or, in fact, doing anything that might put others at risk if one is sick.

I urge all of us to continue our prayers for the speedy recovery of those suffering from this virus. The United State Conference of Catholic Bishops has more information on their website www.usccb.org/liturgy.

Most Rev. Andrew Bellisario, CM
Apostolic Administrator

