

Diocese of Fargo

HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF H1N1 (SWINE FLU) INFLUENZA

Influenza viruses are spread through contact with an infected person's bodily fluids. This contact occurs through inhalation or by touching a surface contaminated with the virus. The following practices will help prevent the spread of illness at Mass. While some of these practices are voluntary, in the interest of Christian charity, all persons are strongly urged to follow them.

1. If you suspect you (includes priests and deacons) are sick, stay at home and *do not* attend Mass until you feel healthy. Missing Mass due to illness is not sinful; it is prudent and shows a respect for your brothers and sisters. Stay at home, watch Mass on television or the Internet, read the Scripture readings for Sunday, pray devotional prayers such as the rosary or the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, make a spiritual Communion.
2. During Mass, at the Sign of Peace, you may choose to simply say "Peace be with you," without offering your hand. You may simply bow to the person next to you. If there is a major outbreak of the flu, priests may suspend the exchange of the Sign of Peace for their parish.
3. During Communion, you may elect to receive the Blessed Sacrament in the consecrated host and not receive the Precious Blood from the chalice. If you have any flu symptoms or a cold, please refrain from receiving the Blood of Christ.
4. At the celebration of the Eucharist in our Catholic Schools the Precious Blood is not to be distributed. For the Sign of Peace encourage the children to bow to one another and not shake hands.
5. Ministers of Holy Communion are to wash their hands with soap and water or sanitize their hands with an alcohol based sanitizer prior to distributing Communion. The use of hand sanitizers, even during Mass, is acceptable for all ministers of Holy Communion, including priests and deacons.
6. Reception of the Blessed Sacrament in the hand is the best way to reduce the possibility of flu virus transmission.
7. Following the celebration of each Mass, after the vessels have been properly purified, the sacristans should wash the vessels with hot, soapy water, then towel dry them, and put them away. Vessels should be sanitized in a dishwasher periodically.
8. While scientific evidence is inconclusive at this point, some health professionals recommend 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.
9. Practice good hygiene: sneeze or cough into a tissue or upper sleeve, not your hands; wash hands frequently with soap and water and scrub for at least 30 seconds; avoid the transmittal of mucus or other bodily fluids; refrain from shaking hands; refrain from sharing a common cup; and above all, if you feel sick, *do not* go to places where you might infect others.

These guidelines are to remain in effect until January 1, 2010