



Guidelines for Liturgical Celebrations during the Flu Season
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In light of expressed concerns during this flu season over the possible spreading of the influenza virus through direct, physical contact, the following guidelines related to the Sacred Liturgy are offered to guide local decisions and encourage catechesis of the faithful:

General Principles

1. Those who are ill with the flu or another illness are dispensed from attendance at Masses of obligation during their illness. They are encouraged on Sunday to view the Diocesan TV Mass and as able to spend time in prayer and reading Sacred Scripture at home.
2. Pastors, in their prudent discretion and understanding of local concerns, may determine appropriate practices that are consistent with liturgical norms.

Holy Communion

1. Individual priest-celebrants should determine whether to distribute Holy Communion under both species at each Mass over which he presides. A common parish policy is encouraged.
2. The fullness of Christ is present individually under the sign of bread and under the sign of wine. Those with flu-like symptoms or those concerned about contagion should feel free at any time throughout the year to refrain from reception of the Precious Blood from the chalice.
3. The dipping of the consecrated host into the chalice by the one receiving Holy Communion is always forbidden.
4. The priest-celebrant and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should take special care to prepare appropriately for the distribution of Holy Communion. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should assist only when there are a large number of communicants. According to liturgical norms they should not approach the altar until after the celebrant has received Communion.

Direct Contact between the Faithful Attending Mass

1. There is no liturgical directive that any or all in the assembly must hold hands during the Our Father. Some find it awkward, overly familiar or intrusive to this devotional prayer to the transcendent Father. The faithful should be encouraged to not hold hands, therefore, if they do not feel comfortable doing so.
2. The sharing of the Sign of Peace may be omitted at the discretion of the priest-celebrant.
3. The shaking of hands during the sharing of the Sign of Peace is always optional. In addition, it should be shared only with those in one's immediate area. It should be presumed during the flu season that many will prefer not to shake hands.

Let us pray for those who are afflicted with the flu or other seasonal illnesses, that adequate health care may be available for all in need, and that the Sacred Liturgies in our diocese are welcoming, appropriately sensitive to health issues and consistent with liturgical norms.

+ *Paul J. Swain*

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