

Influenza or Other Viral Infections and Liturgical Celebrations

As flu season approaches parishes may receive requests from parishioners to make changes to the liturgical celebration in order to prevent the spread of the flu and other viruses.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, in consultation with the Center for Disease Control, recommends that the following measures be taken in the celebration of the liturgy:

- a) Priests, deacons, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should be especially reminded of the need to practice good hygiene. Ministers of Holy Communion should be encouraged to wash their hands before Mass begins, or even to use an alcohol based anti-bacterial solution before and after distributing Holy Communion.
- b) Pastors should instruct people who feel ill not to receive from the cup.
- c) The Diocesan Bishop should always be consulted regarding any changes or restriction of options in the celebration of Roman Catholic Liturgy. However, the need for the introduction of widespread liturgical adaptations for the prevention of the transmission of influenza in the dioceses of the United States of America is not evident at this time.

The complete publication of the USCCB can be found at the following link:

<http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacred-art-and-music/influenza-and-the-liturgy.cfm>

The current *Instruction: Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Assisting at Mass and Communion of the Sick in the Diocese of Cleveland* reiterates that it is always the choice of the communicant to choose to receive the Precious Blood.

As flu season approaches pastors may wish to share with the faithful the following recommendations from the Center for Disease Control:

There are everyday actions people can take to stay healthy.

Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.

Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.

If you get sick, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.