



The Archdiocese of San Francisco
OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

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MEMORANDUM

The annual cold and flu season always offers us the opportunity to teach the faithful about the use of common sense in sharing the sign of peace and the chalice.

It is important to remind the faithful that the obligation to attend Sunday Mass does not apply to those who are ill, especially those who suffer from contagious disease. It is a sign of consideration for others that those with flu-like symptoms remain at home. For the convenience of those who are homebound, or unable to attend Mass because of illness or infirmity, Mass is broadcast each Sunday morning at 6:00 AM on Channels 8, 20 (Comcast), KTSF 26.

Ministers also become ill; therefore, to avoid celebrating Mass when ill, priests should consider alternatives that may be available to them in such circumstances. A short list of priests who could be called in case of need should be prepared at all parishes.

The following ministers should excuse themselves from serving at Mass if they feel any hint of a cold or flu: Deacons • Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion • Lectors
• Musicians • Hospitality ministers • Altar Servers

Within the parishes, we must also use common sense and maintain good habits:

- Check and fill hand-soap dispensers in all of the restrooms of the church. You might also place a large dispenser of hand sanitizer in your church vestibule.
- Maintain clean, fresh holy water and holy water fonts.
- Sanitize with disinfectant wipes places and things in the church that are touched frequently.
- Follow Archdiocesan policies of Blessing of Non-Communicants by not touching those who are being blessed.

Below are a few resources which may be helpful, including:

- A suggested announcement for the beginning of mass.
- Sample bulletin announcements, which you are free to revise in any way you find pastorally helpful.
- The article titled "Influenza and the Liturgy" from the USCCB Committee on the Liturgy, which you are free to duplicate without revision (attached).

If the issue becomes more serious and we are advised to take action by the authorities, we will of course reassess the matter and inform you of any changes.

If there is any way our office can assist you or your parish, please let us know.

SUGGESTED ANNOUNCEMENT BEFORE MASS

During this cold and flu season all parishioners are reminded to use common good sense.

Those who are ill are not obliged to attend mass and should stay home to recover.

If you are feeling ill today, please refrain from partaking of the Blood of Christ from the communal chalice. We also ask that those who are not well refrain from offering your hand to others at the sign of peace.

No one who fears infection should feel obligated to share the sign of peace or receive Holy Communion from the communal chalice.

We pray for the health and recovery of all who are ill and not with us today.

SAMPLE PARISH BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

WINTER COLD AND FLU SEASON

As always, you are reminded to use common good sense in the reception of Holy Communion during the annual cold and flu season.

If you are feeling ill or think you may have been exposed to a virus, you should refrain from partaking of the Blood of Christ from the communal chalice. In the same way, you should refrain from offering your hand to others at the sign of peace. Likewise if you are not comfortable sharing the sign of peace or receiving Holy Communion from the communal chalice for fear of infection, you should feel no pressure to do so.

All of us must be aware of such sensitive matters in the intimate life of the Christian community and we should expect that some will refrain from the sign of peace and the communal chalice out of care for our well being and not out of unkindness or a lack of piety.

LITURGY AND ILLNESS

Please be aware that the obligation to attend Sunday Mass does not apply to those who are ill, especially those who suffer from contagious disease. It is a sign of consideration for others that those with flu-like symptoms remain at home. For the convenience of those who are homebound, or unable to attend Mass because of illness or infirmity, Mass is broadcast each Sunday morning at 6:00 AM on Channels 8, 20 (Comcast), KTSF 26.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO STAY HEALTHY

- **Know the facts.** Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.
- **Take everyday actions to stay healthy.**
- **Cover your nose and mouth** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or into your sleeve if you do not have a tissue available. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- **Wash your hands thoroughly and often** with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.** Germs spread that way.
- **Stay home if you get sick.** CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- **Get vaccinated.** Vaccination is the best protection we have against flu.

Source: Centers for Disease Control (<http://www.cdc.gov>)

INFLUENZA AND THE LITURGY



Throughout the years, the USCCB Secretariat of Divine Worship has addressed the liturgical implications of the transmission of pathogens on numerous occasions. With the flu season now taking place in the United States, we offer the following brief reflections on influenza and the liturgy. Continuously updated information on influenza is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at www.CDC.gov/flu...

INFORMATION ON INFLUENZA

This information is excerpted from the CDC's influenza website:

What is influenza (also called flu)?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year.

How flu spreads

Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or possibly their nose.

Period of contagiousness

You may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days after becoming sick. Some people, especially young children and people with weakened immune systems, might be able to infect others for an even longer time.

Preventing seasonal flu: Get vaccinated

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each season. About two weeks after vaccination, antibodies develop that protect against influenza virus infection. Flu vaccines will not protect against flu-like illnesses caused by non-influenza viruses. The seasonal flu vaccine protects against the three influenza viruses that research suggests will be most common.

THE CHURCH'S LITURGICAL RESPONSE TO INFLUENZA

In previous years, what has the Church done in localities where the outbreak of Influenza is most significant?

In those localities where the outbreak of the disease has been the most significant, bishops have introduced several liturgical adaptations in regard to such practices as the distribution of Holy Communion and the exchange of the Sign of Peace in order to limit the spread of contagion.

What measures should be taken in Roman Catholic liturgies in the United States of America during flu season?

Priests, deacons, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should be especially reminded of the need to practice good hygiene. Ministers of Holy Communion should always wash their hands before Mass begins; a further precaution suggests using an alcohol-based anti-bacterial solution before and after distributing Holy Communion. The faithful should be instructed not to receive from the chalice if they feel ill.

What about further adaptations or the restriction of options at Mass?

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.

What is the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops doing to address this question?

While the USCCB Secretariat of Divine Worship will continue to monitor the situation and provide the best advice possible to Diocesan Bishops and their Offices for Worship, it is ultimately the responsibility of the Diocesan Bishop to recommend or mandate liturgical changes in response to influenza in particular local areas. The Secretariat likewise appreciates whatever information Diocesan Offices for Worship are able to provide concerning local conditions and the pastoral responses developed by Diocesan Bishops.