

## **COMMON SENSE FOR THE COLD AND FLU SEASON**

Over the last few weeks many parishioners have expressed concerns about staying healthy in this flu and cold season that is upon us, especially in the light of media reporting about a possible widespread "Swine Flu" epidemic. Questions about what the parish is doing to help keep people safe and to mitigate the spread of influenza viruses at our weekday and weekend liturgies are uppermost in people's minds. In response to many inquiries, and in the interest of keeping the spread of germs to a minimum when we gather for worship, we offer the following Common Sense Guidelines.

1. **If you are not feeling well, by all means, PLEASE STAY HOME** and take the time that you need to recover. You need not give the gift that keeps on giving to your fellow worshippers. You could spend the time that you would have been at mass in reading, praying and reflecting over the Scripture readings for the week. The references for the week's readings are always printed in the previous week's bulletin. There is no fault or sin in staying home if you are not well and your fellow parishioners would be most grateful for this kindness.

2. Our parish has had a long tradition of **holding hands** during the Lord's Prayer and of sharing a handshake or embrace at the Sign of Peace. Holding hands during the Lord's Prayer is an optional gesture on your part. If someone chooses not to hold your hand, please do not be offended or assume that they are being unsociable. And if you do not wish to hold hands yourself, a smile and a polite "no thank you" should communicate your desire or need. You may choose to simply lift your hands with palms upturned in a gesture of prayer (the "orans" prayer position), just as the priest celebrant does during the Lord's Prayer.

As for shaking hands or exchanging an embrace at the Sign of Peace, that is entirely up to you. If you do not wish to do so, a friendly "Nod of Peace" or "Caring Smile" should suffice as an appropriate gesture.

3. **For the time being, we will continue to offer Communion under both species.** If the flu epidemic worsens, we may receive direction from Archbishop Brunett about a policy for all parishes in the archdiocese. In the meantime, if you choose not to partake of the cup for health reasons, that is perfectly acceptable. Our Lord is fully present to us in either or both forms of the Eucharist. That having been said, we cannot emphasize too strongly that **if you are not feeling well, (i.e., coughing, sneezing, sinus or respiratory infection), PLEASE DO NOT DRINK FROM THE CUP** out of consideration for your fellow parishioners.

**Receiving Holy Communion in the hand, and not on the tongue,** will also help to minimize the spread of cold and influenza viruses. The priest or Eucharistic minister could very easily touch the mouth or the tongue when giving Communion and then touch the mouth or face of the next person. It is liturgically acceptable and no less respectful to our Lord, and perhaps in this flu season, appropriate, to receive in the hand.

4. And finally, we have made available to our Altar Servers and Eucharistic Ministers **alcohol based hand sanitizers** to be used in the sanctuary before handling the sacred vessels and before distributing Holy Communion. All have been asked to use hand sanitizer. In addition, **WE ARE MAKING A LARGE BOTTLE OF HAND SANITIZER AVAILABLE AT EACH USHER'S TABLE FOR USE BY ALL OF OUR PARISHIONERS WHEN THEY COME TO MASS.** We encourage everyone to use the sanitizer. We also ask your cooperation in monitoring your children's use of this product. If we all work together, these positive steps will help to keep our weekday and Sunday worship healthy for us all.