

## **COLD & FLU SEASON PRECAUTIONS**

When Catholics gather in Jesus' name to celebrate the Eucharist, our first concern is sharing our gratitude, our faith, and our belief in Christ among us.

### **PRECAUTIONS**

However, in any gathering of people, the sharing of germs is inevitable. In the midst of the cold and flu season, each of us has the responsibility of taking precautions to prevent the spread of these and other illnesses. Frequent hand-washing, covering of mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, and vigilance regarding habits and procedures for disease prevention in high risk areas should be common practice. As we face a severe flu outbreak in our community, greater attention must be given to keeping one another healthy. Some practical steps, along with common sense are critical to achieving this.

Concern has been raised over whether the sharing of the cup at Holy Communion contributes to the spread of the flu and any other contagious disease. The best information available regarding the risk of transmission of disease from the use of a common Communion cup is that the risk is "very low." A report by the Center for Disease Control published in the American Journal of Infection Control stated that "the risk for infectious disease transmission by a common communion cup is very low, and appropriate safeguards-that is, wiping the interior and exterior rim between communicants, use of care to rotate the cloth during use, and use of a clean cloth for each service-would further diminish this risk." Nevertheless, the CDC advises that persons with an "active respiratory infection, e.g., a cold or flu," should refrain from using the common cup.

### **SHOULD YOU COME TO MASS?**

The Obligation to attend Mass on Sunday and other Holy Days of Obligation is the ordinary expectation for Roman Catholics (Canon 1247). However, extraordinary circumstances such as sickness or severe weather excuse the faithful from this obligation. If you suspect you have the flu or are suffering from a serious cold or other contagious illness, please stay at home and do not risk spreading infection to others.

### **THE SIGN OF PEACE**

Please do not take offense should someone choose not to shake hands with you during the Sign of Peace. An appropriate gesture for those who are concerned about spreading the flu virus might be to clasp your hands together and with a smile say "Peace be with you".

### **RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION**

Roman Catholics believe that both the Body and the Blood of Christ are contained fully in the Holy Eucharist under the form of either the Consecrated Host or the Precious Blood; that is, whether one receives only the Host or only the Precious Blood, one receives Jesus fully. While the Church encourages reception of both Forms at Mass as a fuller expression of the Last Supper, this may not always be possible. If you are feeling sick or suspect that you might have been exposed to something contagious, please refrain from receiving Holy Communion from the cup, and receive only the Sacred Host. It is never appropriate to dip your host into the cup, as this is irreverent and can contaminate the cup. Pastors may exercise discretion as to temporarily refraining from distributing Holy Communion under both Forms, depending on the severity of an outbreak and how widespread it has become within the parish boundaries.

### **HEEDING MEDICAL ADVICE**

If you've been told by your medical advisor that you are particularly susceptible to infection or to complications due to flu in particular, please refrain from practices that might make you sick, including shaking hands, receiving Holy Communion on the tongue, drinking the Precious Blood from the Chalice, etc.