

COLD AND FLU SEASON BEST PRACTICES

In our effort to be prudent without becoming alarmist, and following the lead of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, follow these practices to prevent the spread of the Flu and Colds. Flu viruses are ordinarily transmitted from person to person through bodily fluids by physical contact, including contact with inanimate objects or by inhalation. The flu virus is more active in larger gatherings of people. However, there are ways to prevent the spread of the virus. **These practices are strictly voluntary**; however, in the interest of Christian charity, all persons are strongly urged to follow them. If you suspect you might be infected with the flu virus, stay at home and do not attend Mass until you feel healthy. Missing Mass due to illness is not sinful; it is prudent and shows a respect for your brothers and sisters. Stay at home, watch "Mass for Shut-Ins" on television or the Internet, pray devotional prayers such as the rosary or the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, make a spiritual Communion, etc.

1. During Mass, at the Our Father hand holding should be discouraged, and at the Sign of Peace, you may choose to simply say "Peace be with you," without offering your hand but certainly making eye contact with the person as you say the words. (Do not judge negatively anyone who chooses these options)
2. During Communion, you may elect to receive the Blessed Sacrament in the consecrated host and not receive the Precious Blood from the chalice. (Greatest risk of transmission comes not from the rim of the cup, but rather from the area where one holds the cup. Use of hand sanitizer upon returning to the pews would be prudent.) One does not receive "less" grace because they receive under one form rather than both.
3. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should use hand sanitizers before and after distribution of Holy Communion, this is acceptable for all ministers and Altar servers, including the priest and deacon.
4. Reception of the Blessed Sacrament on the hand is the best way to reduce the possibility of colds and of flu virus transmission.
5. Practice general respiratory etiquette: cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough; wash hands frequently with soap and water and scrub for at least 30 seconds; avoid the transmittal of mucus or bodily fluids if you suspect you may be infected; refrain from shaking hands; refrain from sharing a common cup; and above all, if you feel sick, *do not* come to places where you might infect others.

In the Lord's peace and joy,

Fr. Mark