



Diocese of Beaumont

Catholic Pastoral Center

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May 1, 2009

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I am issuing this statement as a precautionary response based upon the World Health Organization "phase 5 alert" of April 29, 2009 on the growing epidemic of Influenza/Swine Flu. Depending on the development of this epidemic, further precautions may have to be taken. Please check the diocesan website (www.dioceseofbmt.org), the *East Texas Catholic*, and your parish bulletins for updates. Also check the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' website for additional reflections (www.uscc.org/liturgy/swineflu.shtml).

This and a higher threat level will impact our Catholic Schools, our liturgical practices, and other areas of parish, school, and diocesan life. **It is imperative that all clergy, parishes, & schools heed these directions and diligently observe these liturgical adaptations IMMEDIATELY** until notified by our Diocesan Office of Worship to resume former approved liturgical activities.

As a GENERAL precaution, **ALL are encouraged to remain home at the first sign of illness.** Even under ordinary circumstances, persons who are ill are not bound to be present for Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. Minimize the risk of exposing others to illness. Stay home from work, school, and errands when sick. **See the doctor early if flu symptoms develop.** Also remember the importance of basic health measures, e.g. **frequent hand washing** using soap and water or a waterless alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Follow other precautions recommended by public health officials (e.g. sneezing/coughing).

In addition to the above, the following are more specific directions to be implemented.

Clergy: *[Please instruct and remind your Extraordinary Ministers and parishioners about these liturgical adaptations.]*

1. Practice good hygiene. Wash hands before Mass begins. Use an alcohol-based anti-bacterial solution before and after distributing Holy Communion.
2. Although some parishes have continued to hold hands at Mass during the Our Father, this is *not* the approved liturgical posture. Now is a good time to discontinue that practice.
3. Advise the congregation: at the Sign of Peace during Mass it may be prudent to avoid shaking hands or other bodily contact. A bow, a wave, or saying "Peace be with you" are all acceptable expressions. No one should take offense if a member chooses not to shake the other person's hand.
4. Discontinue offering the Blood of Christ at Eucharist. Only clergy are to receive the Blood of Christ. Exchanging the chalice from person to person and drinking from it may be an unnecessary risk. Remind parishioners that it is the teaching of the Church that Christ is fully present, body and blood, soul and divinity, in the form of the Host that is distributed at the Mass.
5. Give Holy Communion only in the hand, which is the ordinary way of receiving Communion. Discontinue giving Holy Communion on the tongue.
6. After each Mass, thoroughly wash all the liturgical vessels with soap and water. [This is expected even in ordinary circumstances.]
7. If continuing to greet parishioners after Mass, avoid hand shakes & other bodily contact.

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8. Take prudent precautions to enhance the cleanliness and safety of other areas of the Church (e.g. holy water fonts, pools of water, door handles, etc.).

9. Frequently check restrooms to make sure they are clean and adequately supplied with anti-bacterial soap and/or alcohol-based anti-bacterial solution.

10. Be alert to updates and/or increased precautions that I will send out to you if the situation worsens. *Distribute these and future directions to your parishioners as soon as possible in the bulletin and at the back of the Church.*

Extraordinary Ministers of Communion:

1. Practice good hygiene. Wash hands before Mass begins. Use an alcohol-based anti-bacterial solution before and after distributing Holy Communion. Use the same hygiene when taking Communion to the sick and homebound.

2. Assist the priest with washing thoroughly all the liturgical vessels with soap and water after each Mass.

Parishioners and Others:

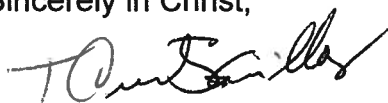
1. Observe the temporary adaptations in liturgical practices until instructed otherwise.

2. Be attentive to the indications of our public health officials with respect to the transmission of this flu virus.

Let us pray for those who have died from this flu and for their families. Also pray for all medical professionals and staff who are attending to the sick and dying, and who obviously will face increasing challenges during this epidemic.

This is a time for making sacrifices for the sake of the common good. Perhaps we can learn to translate this fundamental Christian principle to other areas of our lives.

Sincerely in Christ,



Most Rev. Curtis J. Guillory, S.V.D, D.D.
Bishop of Beaumont

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