

Bishop Vann's Statement Regarding Precautionary Swine Flu Liturgical Adaptations For the Parish Community

Because of the concerns regarding the possible spread of the Swine Flu that has been detected in North Texas, the Diocese of Fort Worth, in consultation with the federal Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Tarrant County Health Department, is asking all our parishes and school to take precautions to help mitigate its effects. This applies to the entire diocese.

I have recommended that all priests and deacons as well as members of our diocese exercise common sense precautions when it comes to the liturgy. Influenza is often spread from person to person through contact with coughing and sneezing of an infected person. Simple hygiene such as washing hands and using alcohol based hand sanitizers at appropriate times can prevent the spread of influenza. If a priest, altar server or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion is sick whether it is the flu or the common cold or whatever, then he or she should not serve until the sickness has passed. Likewise, if members of the faithful community are feeling well, especially during this period, please stay home and do not risk the possibility of spreading infections to others.

The following precautions should be followed concerning the celebration of Mass:

- The faithful should be encouraged to not hold hands during the reciting of the Our Father.
- The faithful should be encouraged to share the Sign of Peace without touching hands or kissing. This can be done with meaningful eye contact, smiles and a bow of the head in reverence to one another.
- The faithful should be encouraged to receive Communion in their hands and not on their tongue.
- The cup is not to be shared with the faithful during Mass. Communion is only to be given in the species of the consecrated bread.
- Priests, deacons, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should be especially reminded of the need to practice good hygiene. Ministers of Holy Communion must be encouraged to wash their hands before Mass begins, or even to use an alcohol based anti-bacterial solution before and after distributing Holy Communion. As good practice is the distribution of alcohol based anti bacterial solution by the Eucharistic Minister Captain to other ministers while the priests is preparing for distribution of Communion.

The Diocesan School Superintendent's Office is coordinating with each school concerning precautionary actions in schools.

Let us all pray that for our community and the families that are affected by this disease suffer minor affects and recover promptly. And pray for those who have died. May their souls rest in peace.