

Influenza, the H1N1 Virus and the Liturgy

General Guidelines for the Diocese of Erie

We have received numerous requests for guidance concerning flu and the H1N1 virus in regard to the liturgy. **The following practices always should be in place.**

For all persons: Follow the best standard hygienic practices:

- Stay home when sick.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water when possible.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when water is not available.
- Cover noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or a shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available).
- Avoid touching your face, eyes, etc. with your hands.
- Avoid receiving from the cup if you do not feel well.

In addition, for all Liturgical Ministers (including clergy):

- Wash hands prior to, and after, Mass.

Furthermore, for All Those Distributing Communion:

- After exchanging the Sign of Peace briefly, prepare to distribute Communion.
- Extraordinary ministers should use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (discreetly please, i.e., not in the sanctuary if at all possible) before & after distributing communion.
- Avoid physically touching those coming forward in the communion line, whether they are receiving on the hand, or on the tongue, or asking for a blessing.
- Follow all standard procedures for ministering the cup after each communicant has received:
 - Pinch and wipe thoroughly the rim with the purificator.
 - Rotate the cup one quarter turn after each communicant receives.
 - Regularly re-position the purificator to a clean section as you are using it.

Additional Recommended Measures for Parishes:

- Establish regular schedules for frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces (for example, pews, doorknobs, bathrooms, elevator buttons, etc.).
- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces, e.g., doorknobs, can be wiped down frequently by ushers, etc. before Mass.
- Make widely available hand washing facilities with soap and warm running water, hand sanitizer, and tissues.

Should a health crisis become imminent in local areas of the diocese, the Bishop may give further instructions as needed.