

# THE FLU & MASS

## What should we do?

*Whenever two or more people gather, some sharing of germs is inevitable. However, when we gather in Jesus' name for Mass, our first concern is the sharing of our gratitude, our trust, our belief in Christ who is with us.*

*The Fall Flu Season is underway. The virus that is getting the most attention this year is the H1N1 ("swine flu"), for nearly all of us may be at risk for catching it.*

*Each of us has the responsibility of taking precautions to prevent the spread of this disease. We need to wash our hands frequently, be careful when we cough and sneeze, scrutinize our habits, our practices and our procedures where the spread of infection seems most possible.*

*Here are some things to keep in mind.*

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

**HOLDING HANDS DURING THE LORD'S PRAYER** – This custom was introduced into many local parishes in the 1980s. While it is ideal for us all to be united in our postures and gestures at Mass (as a sign of our unity as members of Christ's body) holding hands has never been a requirement. It is very fitting to pray the "Our Father" in the *orans* position with the palms of your hands lifted upward, or with hands folded together.

**SIGN OF PEACE:** Please don't be offended if someone chooses 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 strive for eye contact rather than physical contact. You could clasp your hands together and bow gently to those around you, and with a smile say "Peace be with you," or "Peace of Christ."

**RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION:** Roman Catholics believe that both the Body and the Blood of Christ are contained in the Holy Eucharist under the form of the consecrated host. But the Church also encourages reception of the cup at Mass as a fuller expression of the Last Supper and Christ's blood poured out for us in sacrifice. **If you are feeling sick, please receive communion in the hand, and refrain from receiving communion from the cup.**

**PREGNANT WOMEN AND PERSONS WITH COMPROMISED IMMUNE SYSTEMS:** 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.

For more information, visit: [www.usccb.org/liturgy/swineflu.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/swineflu.shtml)

Flu and Mass 10-22-09



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