



DIOCESE OF GARY

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Office of Worship

Chancery/Pastoral Center

MEMORANDUM

To: All Priests
From: Fr. Martin J. Dobrzynski, director
Mr. Kristopher W. Seaman, associate director
Date: 5/1/2009
Re: Swine influenza, the Sign of Peace, and Reception from the Cup

The Office of Worship has received some concerns about the new swine influenza possibly affecting the use of the sign of peace and the reception of the cup during communion.

It should be noted that this particular flu strain is not new (CDC online). Though it is serious it is treatable. Bishop Dale Melczek and the Office of Worship are monitoring the situation through the Centers for Disease Control. If the situation reaches epidemic, as defined by the CDC within our diocesan boundaries, then the Bishop through the Office of Worship will determine whether an entire assembly refrain from shaking hands or from receiving from the Precious Blood.

Those who wash the vessels after they have been purified should once again be informed to wash the chalices in hot soapy water and then towel dry the chalices with fresh towels. Also Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should be again informed to wash their hands thoroughly before coming to Mass and if necessary to discretely use hand sanitizer before they come up to the altar area.

We suggest that pastors may announce the following information, in these or similar words, to the assembly. Both an oral announcement and the subsequent publishing in the parish bulletin of the following information might spur a better understanding among some of the faithful:

It is understandable that there is a cautious concern amongst many about contracting this recent strain of influenza. Presently there is no epidemic, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) of swine flu within the Diocese of Gary, yet that does not mean we should not take precautions in regards to this health concern. The sign of peace within the context of liturgy is an invitation to reconciliation, unity and communion between God and all people, especially those present in the assembly. This gesture helps us prepare to receive the body and blood of Christ, the Prince of Peace. Theologically and liturgically, the sign of peace and reception from the Precious Blood are integral parts of the liturgy, and should not be prohibited on a universal basis.