

## Swine Flu and Liturgical Celebrations

Along with the recommendations of the CDC and the USCCB (see below), the Diocese of Richmond recommends precautionary measures to be taken at liturgical celebrations that may become mandatory, should the pandemic threat level rise.

The swine flu is transmitted by airborne droplets and by contact. It is best that those who are sick not attend Mass or other large gatherings. If they do, they should follow the guidelines below, and also refrain from sharing in the cup. To miss Mass when one is ill is never a sin.

- Ordinary (priests and deacons) and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should "wash" their hands before and after distributing. Parishes may choose to do any of the following:
  - provide individual antibacterial hand wipes to each minister, or
  - provide a small pump of antibacterial gel at the credence table, where all ministers will go to clean their hands before gathering around the altar
- Hospitality Ministers (Greeters and Ushers) should be encouraged to carefully wash their hands and/or use hand sanitizer before and after their ministries of greeting others, taking up the collection, and passing out bulletins at the end of Mass.
- In lieu of a handshake at the Sign of Peace at Mass, people may smile or make a small bow of the head to others as a sign of reverence.
- In lieu of holding hands at the Lord's Prayer, people may pray with hands folded, or extended or raised, known as the traditional *orans* gesture.
- Altar servers should wash their hands before setting the altar
- If non-communicants come forward for a blessing, the blessing should be given without touching them.
- No handshakes when the gifts are received
- All ministers of the altar should take the same precautions
- Accommodations should be made for those with special needs, e.g. Celiac-Sprue
- An announcement about the requested changes should be made before Mass begins.
- Because not everyone is present at the beginning of Mass, it will be important to include a comment about these temporary changes during the homily and/or after the Great Amen and before the reciting of the Our Father.

The U.S. bishops' Committee on Divine Worship has posted on the Web a series of 10 questions and answers related to participation at Mass during the time of the swine influenza (swine flu).  
<http://usccb.org/liturgy/swineflu.shtml>

See also the government site: PandemicFlu.gov; it is also in Spanish  
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/community/faithcomchecklist.html>