

## **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.