



Diocese of Worcester
Office of the Bishop
49 Elm Street
Worcester, Massachusetts 01609

DATE: January 11, 2013
TO: All Priests
FROM: Bishop McManus
RE: Guidelines to Reduce the Spread of Influenza Virus

Due to the rise in incidence of the flu in Worcester County, I am announcing the following guidelines for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy during this flu season. These guidelines reinforce recommended practices to reduce the transmission of the flu and will go into effect immediately.

I ask that these guidelines be published and/or shared with your parishioners.

1. The distribution of the Precious Blood for the faithful may be suspended, with the exception of those who must receive from the cup, i.e., priests, deacons or those who must receive due to medical reasons. The Catholic Church teaches that Christ, whole and entire, is received even under only one species.
2. The exchange of the Sign of Peace may be offered without any physical contact. When the priest celebrant extends the invitation for the sign of peace, the faithful, instead of a handshake, may bow to the persons nearby.
3. All ministers of Holy Communion should use hand sanitizer prior to the distribution of Holy Communion. Alcohol-based or other appropriate waterless hand sanitizers should be made available on the credence table for such use.
4. While the faithful retain the option of receiving Holy Communion on the tongue or in the hand, all ministers of Holy Communion are advised to distribute the consecrated hosts with care, being cautious not to touch the tongue or the hand of the communicant as much as possible.
5. The Holy Water fonts are to be drained, cleaned with a disinfectant, and re-filled with holy water on a regular basis. Please note that the removed holy water should be disposed of appropriately in the sacarium or poured into the ground.
6. Parishioners should be reminded that if they are ill or suspect they are ill with a contagious illness, they are not bound by the Sunday Mass obligation. They should remain at home and return to church when they are well.
7. Additional precautions should be used in the maintenance of worship spaces and church halls, in particular the disinfecting of areas or items which come in contact with hands, such as handrails, restroom areas, and the tops of pews.