



## DIOCESE OF ORANGE

### Precautions to Avoid the Spread of Influenza at Liturgy

On October 23, 2009, the feast of St. John of Capistrano the secondary patron of the Diocese of Orange, Bishop Brown recommended that all priests and deacons as well as members of our diocese exercise common sense precautions when it comes to the liturgy. Influenza, and in particular H1N1, is often spread from person to person through contact with coughing and sneezing of an infected person. Simple hygiene such as washing hands and using alcohol based hand sanitizers at appropriate times can prevent the spread of influenza.

If a priest, altar server or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion is sick whether it is the flu or the common cold, then he or she should not serve until the sickness has passed. Likewise, if members of the faithful community are not feeling well, especially during this period, please stay home and do not risk the possibility of spreading infections to others. It is not sinful to miss Mass if you are sick and unable to attend; it is an act of charity for those with flu symptoms to stay home and not risk the health of others.

Since holding hands during the Lord's Prayer can lead to transmission of the virus, the faithful are strongly urged to adopt an *orans* position (hands extended) or another prayerful posture (hands clasped) for the communal recitation of the "Our Father".

The faithful are encouraged to share the Sign of Peace without touching hands or kissing. This can be done with meaningful eye contact, smiles and a bow of the head in reverence to one another or simply by saying "The peace of the Lord be with you always" with a response such as "amen" or "and also with you".

It remains the option of the communicant whether they receive the Precious Blood. Bishop Brown does not want to eliminate the option of receiving under the form of the Precious Blood as some people are not able to receive the Body of Christ due to allergies and other health reasons.

Ministers of Holy Communion are encouraged to wash their hands before Mass begins, or even to use an alcohol based anti-bacterial solution before and after distributing Holy Communion. Communicants are strongly encouraged to receive communion in the hand since it is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid contact with saliva in distributing Holy Communion on the tongue. This restriction will be lifted when the health danger from influenza has passed.

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