

GETTING READY FOR FLU SEASON: What Should We Be Doing at Mass Now?

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The 2009-2010 Flu Season is just about to begin. The most common flu virus around is the new H1N1, which means that almost all of us are not immune to it and are at risk for catching it. While we await the arrival of the H1N1 flu shot (as well as the seasonal flu vaccine), here are some things to keep in mind as far as Mass is concerned:

Sunday Obligation: The Obligation to attend Mass on Sunday other Holy Days of Obligation, (Canon 1247) is the ordinary expectation of Catholics. Obviously, extraordinary circumstances such as sickness, travel, or severe weather excuse the faithful from this obligation. If you are not feeling well, especially during this time of concern, please stay at home and do not risk spreading infection to others.

Sign of Peace: Members of our congregations should not be offended if someone chooses not to shake the other person's hand at the sign of peace. If you are ill (and still come to Mass), the appropriate response to someone extending a sign of peace might be to bow to them and say, "Peace be with You," to avoid bodily contact or one might wave slightly at the other person.

Reception of Holy Communion: While it is the teaching of the Church that the Fullness of the Body and Blood of Christ are contained in the Holy Eucharist, under the form of the Host that is distributed at the Mass, the Church has also extended the privilege to receive communion in the form of wine. However, if you are feeling sick, please receive communion in the hand, and refrain from receiving communion under the form of the Blood of Christ.

Pregnant Women and Persons with Compromised Immune Systems: Persons who have been directed by their medical advisors that they are particularly susceptible to infection, or to complications due to flu in particular, may choose to refrain from any practices by which they might become sick, including shaking hands, receiving Holy Communion on the tongue, drinking the Precious Blood from the Chalice, etc.