

## **Guidance when seasonal flu or a more serious epidemic is circulating.**

**As community of faith, we need to take proper care of ourselves. We must take care of each other's well being. We must take care not to spread the flu.**

It is important to make a distinction and heed the latest advice of the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) [www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie)

The annual flu virus raises a number of concerns and how we react to it should not impact negatively on the celebration of the Liturgy. The following are precautionary measures that can be taken to limit the transmission of infection.

**Going to Church** People with flu symptoms are dispensed from their Sunday obligation to attend Mass. Those with flu symptoms should stay at home for seven days from the onset of illness. The obligation to take part in Mass does not apply to those who are sick. The sick person might join in celebrating Mass via the internet or radio and television.

**Communion on the Tongue** In the past, the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) has said receiving Holy Communion directly on the tongue "should be discouraged" during flu season. However, if it does occur, priests or ministers of the Eucharist should clean their hands using an alcohol based hand gel. No one is to be refused communion because they wish to receive on the tongue.

**The Chalice** If the Priest celebrant's health is compromised by cold or flu then the priest's chalice should be restricted to him only and not used to distribute the Precious Blood to other ministers or the assembly. Additional chalices should be used for common distribution.

**General giving of chalice** Where the Precious Blood is offered to all to receive, those who suspect symptoms that may signal impending flu or cold should refrain from receiving the Precious Blood and receive only the Body of Christ in the consecrated host until they are well again.

**Sign of Peace** The HPSC has said that the handshake at the time of the "sign of peace" involves a low risk of spreading the virus. However, since even under ordinary circumstances some people are not able to shake hands due to medical conditions, one might choose among a number of other options of shaking hands to make a bow of the head to the people around you and say "Peace be with you"

### **Consider putting this notice in your parish newsletter**

*Those who have flu are under no obligation to go to Mass. If you have the flu, please stay at home, rest, stay well hydrated and, if necessary, seek your doctor's help. Mass is available via the internet on the Diocesan website [www.dublindiocese.ie](http://www.dublindiocese.ie) as well as many parishes and via television and radio.*

***Sign of Peace:** Due to the number of colds and flu around, we would kindly remind our parishioners that during the sign of peace it is fine to simply smile, wave, or bow to other to convey Christ's peace to them.*

### **Ministers of Holy Communion/Washing of Hands**

- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should practice good hygiene before leaving their seat to minister communion. It is not recommended they ritualise the act of hand washing or sanitising at the credence table or in the sanctuary.
- Sacristans and others who wash the vessels after they have been ritually purified should be sure to use soap and hot water to wash the vessels after each use.

**Visiting the Sick**, those who visit the sick should use prudence and common sense. If they themselves feel the symptoms of flu or virus it is advised they do not visit the sick to avoid compromising both their own health and the health of the person they are visiting or their families.

**Holy Water Fonts** Hygienic upkeep of the fonts is needed particularly during flu season, this means frequent changing of the water followed by cleaning of the font with a household detergent based cleaner (such as washing up liquid).

**Parishes should consider the following**

- Advise clergy and the congregation not to attend if they are ill
  - Provide bins for disposal of tissues at Church gatherings
  - Ensure all hard surfaces that are frequently touched, such as door handles, hand rails, taps, are cleaned regularly with a household detergent or antiseptic wipes.
  - Ensure hand-washing facilities, including soap and disposable towels, are well maintained
  - Supply tissues and hand-washing gel at Church services/gatherings.

*(adapted from the National Centre for Liturgy)*