



DIOCESE OF STOCKTON

209-466-0636  
Fax: 209-941-9722  
1105 North Lincoln Street  
Stockton, CA 95203

[www.stocktondiocese.org](http://www.stocktondiocese.org)

April 28, 2009

MEMORANDUM

To: All Priests, Deacons, and Liturgy Coordinators

From: Most Reverend Stephen E. Blaire

CC: Sisters, DPC Members, Diocesan Staff

RE: Swine Flu and the Celebration of Mass in the Diocese of Stockton

“In the past 72 hours, the United States government has declared a health emergency as a result of the Swine Influenza virus circulating in the US and Mexico.” (Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services, Inc.)

I am asking all our parishes to take the following precautions to help mitigate its effects.

- The faithful should be encouraged to not hold hands during the reciting of the Our Father.
- The faithful should be 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.
- The faithful should be encouraged to receive Communion in their hands, and not on their tongue.
- The cup is not to be shared with the faithful during Mass. Communion is only to be given in the species of the consecrated bread. However, if you have individuals in your parish who have Celiac disease and can only receive Communion from the cup, then they should be allowed to make the choice as to whether or not they are comfortable receiving from the cup at this time, and if they are, a simple means of allowing them to receive from the cup should be planned.
- Priests, deacons, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should be especially reminded of the need to practice good hygiene. Ministers of Holy Communion must be encouraged to wash their hands before Mass begins, or even to use an alcohol based anti-bacterial solution before and after distributing Holy Communion.

Once the emergency nature of this scare has passed, we will quickly re-institute our traditional means of sharing the sign of peace and norm of distributing communion from the cup at each Sunday celebration of the Eucharist within the Diocese of Stockton.

In addition to the decrees above, I would like to make the following suggestions regarding pastorally implementing these temporary changes within the parishes:

- Your pastoral judgment and pastoral approach are critical to ensuring that these temporary changes are seen as being in the best interest of the faithful, as well as ensuring that no one with special circumstances is excluded from the table.
- Remind parishioners that they should not come to church when they are not feeling well.
- Presiders and deacons should carefully wash their hands before and after Mass, and use an alcohol based hand sanitizer before distributing Communion.
- Hospitality Ministers (Greeters and Ushers) should be encouraged to carefully wash their hands and/or use hand sanitizer before and after their ministries of greeting others, taking up the collection, and passing out bulletins at the end of Mass.
- An announcement about the requested changes should be made before Mass begins.
- If people are invited to greet one another, it should be after the announcement that they are being asked to not shake hands.
- Because not everyone is present at the beginning of Mass, it will be important to include a comment about these temporary changes during the homily and/or after the Great Amen and before the reciting of the Our Father.
- If a non-communicant comes forward for a blessing, the blessing should be given without touching them.
- This is an important time to pay attention to the members of your community who are handicapped and who need to receive on the tongue, or who need assistance in receiving. They should not feel turned away from Communion at this or any other time. Having an experienced minister go to them at the end of Communion and serve them will ensure they are not excluded, and that the minister is then able to immediately go and wash their hands or use hand sanitizer.

Below is information from the Centers for Disease Control you can publish in your bulletin to help the faithful be aware of the steps they can take to stay healthy and prevent the spread of this disease.

**Preventing the Flu:  
Good Health Habits Can Help Stop Germs**

- 1. Avoid close contact.** Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- 2. Stay home when you are sick.** If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- 3. Cover your mouth and nose.** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- 4. Clean your hands.** Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.
- 5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- 6. Practice other good health habits.** Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

**Buenos hábitos de salud para la prevención**

- 1. Evite el contacto cercano con otras personas.** Evite acercarse a personas enfermas. Si se enferma, manténgase alejado de otras personas para protegerlas y evitar que ellas también se enfermen.
- 2. Quédese en casa si está enfermo.** Si es posible, quédese en casa y no vaya al trabajo, la escuela ni a lugares públicos si está enfermo. De esta manera, ayudará a evitar que otros se contagien de su enfermedad.
- 3. Cúbrase la boca y la nariz.** Cúbrase la boca y la nariz con un pañuelo cuando tosa o estornude. Esto puede evitar que quienes estén cerca de usted se enfermen.
- 4. Límpiense las manos.** Lavarse las manos a menudo le ayudará a protegerse contra los gérmenes.
- 5. Trate de no tocarse los ojos, la nariz ni la boca.** Con frecuencia, los gérmenes se propagan cuando una persona toca algo contaminado con esos gérmenes y luego se toca los ojos, la nariz o la boca.
- 6. Tenga buenos hábitos de salud.** Duerma lo suficiente, sea activo físicamente, controle el estrés, beba muchos líquidos y coma alimentos nutritivos.