

# Good Health Practices for Mass

With the onset of the cold and flu season the Office of Worship offers the following reminders on good health practices regarding the celebration of Mass.

## What is the Flu?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Every year in the United States, on average: 5-20% of the population gets the flu and more than 200,000 are hospitalized from flu complications.” (See the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu) for more information.)

## Preventing the Flu – *Take Everyday Preventative Actions*

Common sense is most important for the prevention of a cold or the flu. The following health precautions are strongly recommended to limit your risk of infection.

- **Get vaccinated.** The CDC recommends the flu vaccination, especially for those who are at high risk: young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions & the elderly.
- **Stay home when sick.** There is no sin if you miss Mass because you are sick or taking care of someone who is sick.
- **Cover your mouth and nose.** When you cough or sneeze, use a tissue and throw the tissue in the trash after you use it (or use your sleeve if a tissue is not available).
- **Wash your hands often.** Clean your hands regularly with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- **Avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs spread this way.
- **Stay home an additional 24 hours.** If you are sick with flu-like symptoms, the CDC recommends that you stay home for an additional 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of a fever-reducing medication.
- **Limit contact with others while sick.** If you are feeling sick or you are at risk for infection you should refrain from the Communion cup and perhaps shaking people’s hands at the sign of peace. (If someone chooses to refrain from the handshake, be gracious and considerate.)

While the flu vaccine is still one of the best preventative measures, reliable information, good health habits, getting plenty of rest, nutritious eating, exercise, and managing stress will go a long way toward reducing the risk of infection during the cold and flu season.