



MEMORANDUM

TO: All Clergy

FROM: Archbishop Michael V. Seneco

RE: Swine Flu precautions

DATE: April 27, 2009

We have all seen the news media on the "Swine" flu outbreak in Mexico and now, in several states in the US. I spoke this evening with personnel at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, and I am passing on the following information to you:

- "Swine" flu spreads the same way as any other flu:
 - Coughing & Sneezing;
 - Flu virus on hands;
 - Through mucus membranes- ie: eyes, nose etc.
- People can be infected, and contagious one full day before and up to seven days after symptoms erupt;
- There is currently no effective vaccination for "Swine" flu;

My call to the CDC was to inquire as to whether the passing of a communion chalice would increase the probability of spreading the flu to others. The short answer is yes.

Although alcohol in the wine will kill the influenza virus, there remains a high risk of passing the virus from one communicant to the other when they each take turns holding the chalice.

Non-alcoholic wine does not protect the communicant from spreading the virus from one person to the other on the lip of the cup.

Likewise, the practice of intinction (dipping the Body of Christ into the Blood of Christ) can cause the virus load to be placed in the wine.

EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY:

- The practice of exchanging the sign of peace by shaking hands or other body contact (hugging etc.) is **PROHIBITED**;
- Parishes and ministries who use **NON ALCOHOLIC WINE** shall not pass the chalice from one parishioner to the other;
- Intinction, regardless of the matter used for precious blood is **PROHIBITED**;
- Parishes and ministries who use **ALCOHOLIC WINE** (*12% by volume minimum*) may continue to pass the chalice, however the Eucharistic minister should retain control of the chalice, and not allow the communicant to handle it;
- Chalices should be washed with soap and warm water to disinfect between each use.

When educating your parishioners on this issue, remember to explain to them that we receive the fullness of the Eucharistic meal when we receive communion under any one species. The reception of both species does not in any way "increase" or "complete" the sacrament.

While these rules may seem excessive, and over cautious- the public perception of the Swine Flu issue is one of great concern and panic. These rules should continue to instill confidence in our parishioners for the duration of this public health emergency.

These rules are temporary, and will be automatically rescinded once the CDC ends the health emergency related to the Swine Flu.