

# From the Diocese of St. Petersburg Office of Worship

## Concerns About Communion & the Flu



The Office of Worship often receives inquiries concerning the impact of the flu virus on the Church's practice of Holy Communion and/or the greeting of peace. Hopefully the following information will help alleviate some concerns, especially with regards to Holy Communion from the cup.

### **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/flu/keyfacts](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts) for more information.)

### **How does the Flu Spread?**

According to the CDC, "The flu spreads in respiratory droplets caused by coughing and sneezing. It usually spreads from person to person, though occasionally a person may become infected by touching something with virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose."

### **Preventing the Flu**

Common sense is most important for the prevention of the flu. While a flu vaccination is helpful, the CDC recommends the following health habits in all areas of our life:

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Clean your hands regularly with water and soap or an alcohol based anti-bacterial wash.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Refrain from the Communion cup if you are feeling sick or at risk for infection.

### **Holy Communion from the Cup**

As with past concerns about the flu, the CDC has not indicated a need for any changes in our practice of offering the Communion cup. Also, it is always left to the discretion of each individual as to whether they will receive from the Communion cup. If the above mentioned preventative health habits are followed and all ministers of Holy Communion are cognizant of the following reminders the chances for infection are greatly diminished.

- Stay at home if sick.
- Wash their hands before Mass or use an alcohol based anti-bacterial solution before distributing Holy Communion.
- Open the purificator fully and use a clean portion of the purificator to wipe the inside and outside rims of the cup after each communicant has received.
- Give the cup a ¼ turn before presenting it to the next communicant.

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