

Office of Worship

Diocese of Honolulu

Memorandum

TO: Clergy and all Parishes

FROM: Deacon Modesto Cordero, Director
Office of Worship

DATE: January 31, 2020

RE: Cold and flu season and the Coronavirus outbreak

Flu seasons are unpredictable in a number of ways. Although epidemics of flu happen every year, the timing, severity, and length of the season vary from one year to another. The Office of Worship has received a few calls regarding this year's flu season and the current situation with the Coronavirus outbreak and any possible restrictions to the normal pattern for the Order of Mass or Holy Communion in our diocese. **To date, it has been decided not to put any restrictions at Mass.** However, local pastoral discretion and care should be practiced as necessary. The annual cold and flu season and unexpected outbreaks always offers us the opportunity to teach the faithful about the use of common sense in sharing the sign of peace and the chalice. For example, a smile or a bow, or simply the words "***Peace be with you***" might seem more appropriate during the exchange of peace.

It is important to remind the faithful that the obligation to attend Sunday Mass does not apply to those who are ill, especially those who suffer from a contagious disease. It is a sign of consideration for themselves and others that those with flu-like symptoms remain at home.

Ministers also become ill; therefore, to avoid celebrating Mass when ill, priests should consider alternatives that may be available to them in such circumstances. A short list of priests who could be called in case of need should be prepared at all parishes.

Within the parishes, we must also use common sense and maintain good habits:

- Check and fill hand-soap dispensers in all of the restrooms of the church. You might also place a large dispenser of hand sanitizer in your church vestibule.
- Maintain clean, fresh holy water and holy water fonts and/or empty the holy water containers at the church door.
- Sanitize with disinfectant wipes places and things in the church that are touched frequently.

Below are a few resources which may be helpful, including:

- A suggested announcement for the beginning of Mass.
- Sample bulletin announcements, which you are free to revise in any way you find pastorally helpful.

Please feel free to contact me at the Office of Worship, 808-585-3342 or email at mcordero@rcchawaii.org should you have any questions.

SUGGESTED ANNOUNCEMENT BEFORE MASS

During the cold and flu season and the current situation with the Coronavirus outbreak all parishioners are reminded to use common sense. Those who are ill are not obliged to attend Mass and should stay home to recover. If you are feeling ill today, please refrain from partaking of the Blood of Christ from the communal chalice. We also ask that those who are not well refrain from offering your hand to others at the sign of peace. No one who fears infection should feel obligated to share the sign of peace or receive Holy Communion from the communal chalice. We pray for the health and recovery of all who are ill and not with us today.

SAMPLE PARISH BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

Winter Cold and Flu Season

As always, you are reminded to use common sense in the reception of Holy Communion from the chalice during the annual cold and flu season. If you are feeling ill or think you may have been exposed to a virus, you should refrain from partaking of the Blood of Christ from the communal chalice. In the same way, you should refrain from offering your hand to others at the sign of peace. A smile and a heartfelt "Peace be with you" should suffice. Likewise if you are not comfortable sharing the sign of peace or receiving Holy Communion from the communal chalice for fear of infection, you should feel no pressure to do so. All of us must be aware of such sensitive matters in the intimate life of the Christian community and we should expect that some will refrain from the sign of peace and the communal chalice out of care for our well being and not out of unkindness or a lack of piety.