

HOLY COMMUNION DIRECTIVES

Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

[operative for the 2009/10 flu season]

At their meeting on September 23, 2009, the Latin Rite Bishops of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania agreed to issue directives for Holy Communion during the flu season. The directives are particular to each Diocesan Church, and remain in effect until they are withdrawn by the Diocesan Bishop. Pastors and Parochial Administrators are to implement them by the weekend of October 17/18.

The following will be the norms for our Diocesan Church of Altoona-Johnstown:

1. The Precious Blood will not be distributed under any form. Since we believe that the whole Body of Christ is present under either sign, this temporary directive should not be seen as being contrary to any basic belief of our Catholic Faith.
2. Any sign of peace is to be without bodily contact. Therefore, hand shaking and kissing as signs of peace are to be suspended. Nodding is suggested.
3. The most sanitary way of receiving Holy Communion is in the hand. However, reception on the tongue may not be denied.

Furthermore, Pastors and Administrators are to see to the following:

1. All ministers assisting with the distribution of Holy Communion are to wash or sanitize their hands just prior to doing so.
2. The water in holy water fonts is to be changed on a regular basis.
3. The Faithful should be encouraged to wash their hands before coming to church and be assured that they are excused from the obligation when staying home due to the flu.

While the H1N1 Flu (commonly known as the Swine Flu) is not, at this time, an epidemic in the Commonwealth, the Bishops felt a responsibility to take whatever steps they can that might help prevent such an epidemic. Personally, I do not believe that anyone would acquire a fatal illness from the Precious Blood, if the vessels were wiped properly. Nevertheless, it is better to err on the side of precaution.

It needs to be remembered that these norms are temporary. The Diocesan Bishop of each particular Diocesan Church will announce when these directives are withdrawn so that it may return to its regular practice for the distribution and reception of Holy Communion. Pastors and Parochial Administrators have my gratitude for their solicitude in implementing these directives.

(Most Rev.) Joseph V. Adamec
Bishop of Altoona-Johnstown

Chancery, Hollidaysburg PA
October 4, 2009