



**THE MOST REVEREND
Alexander J. Brunett
ARCHBISHOP OF SEATTLE**

May 1, 2009

Dear Father, Pastoral Coordinator:

In the past week, the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have issued warnings about the possibility of a pandemic arising from an increase in the swine flu virus. Many have been infected; some have died. I and my staff are monitoring the situation. Please know that I am keeping all who are affected by this virus in my prayers. I recognize the challenges faced – and appreciate the expertise displayed – by our government and health care professionals in dealing with this situation.

In our effort to be prudent without becoming alarmist, the Archdiocese of Seattle, after consulting with local medical experts, and following the lead of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, issues these reminders. **You are strongly encouraged to follow these practices and inform your congregations about them to prevent the spread of disease.**

Flu viruses are ordinarily transmitted from person to person through bodily fluids by physical contact, including contact with inanimate objects or by inhalation. The flu virus is more active in larger gatherings of people. However, there are ways to prevent the spread of the virus. **These practices are strictly voluntary; however, in the interest of Christian charity, all persons are strongly urged to follow them:**

1. **If you suspect you might be infected with the flu virus, stay at home and do NOT attend Mass until you feel healthy. Missing Mass due to illness is not sinful; it is prudent and shows a respect for your brothers and sisters.**
2. During Mass, at the Sign of Peace, you may choose to simply say “Peace be with you,” without offering your hand.
3. During Communion, you may elect to receive the Blessed Sacrament in the consecrated host and not receive the Precious Blood from the chalice.
4. Ministers of Holy Communion should **wash their hands** prior to coming to Church. The use of hand sanitizers, even during Mass, is acceptable for all ministers of Holy Communion, including the priest and deacon.
5. **Reception of the Blessed Sacrament on the hand is the best way to reduce the possibility of flu virus transmission.**
6. Following the celebration of each Mass, after the vessels have been properly purified, the sacristans should wash the vessels with hot, soapy water, then towel dry them, and put them away.

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7. While scientific evidence is inconclusive at this point, some health professionals are recommending taking precautions when using holy water. Water from the fonts should not be ingested, nor should it enter the body via the eyes or nose.
8. Remind people to practice respiratory etiquette: cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough; wash hands frequently with soap and water and scrub for at least 30 seconds; avoid the transmittal of mucus or bodily fluids if you suspect you may be infected; refrain from shaking hands; refrain from sharing a common cup; and above all, if you feel sick, **DO NOT** come to places where you might infect others.

The latest information and advisories will be continually updated on our Archdiocesan website: www.seattlearch.org,

Thank you for your attention to these matters and for all that you do to avoid spreading the flu virus.

With warmest regards and wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Alex J. Brunett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross symbol at the beginning.

Most Rev. Alex J. Brunett
Archbishop of Seattle