

Heightened Flu Activity Office of Risk Management

This year's influenza virus is the most widespread outbreak since public health authorities began keeping track more than a dozen years ago, according to the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD). The most dominant flu strain infecting people this season is H3N2. A similar strain called H1N1 was responsible for the 1918 flu pandemic, and the 2009 "swine flu" outbreak. Because people have had less exposure to H3N2 up until now, populations have not had time to build up immunity and thus more people are becoming ill with the virus.

Scientists think this season's flu vaccine may only be about 30 percent effective against H3N2. However, the CDC strongly recommends influenza vaccination for all persons 6 months of age and older. There is still time to get a flu shot if you haven't done so already. Call your health care provider or visit a local pharmacy that offers flu vaccinations.

Liturgical Directives

- Holy water fonts are to be drained, cleaned with disinfecting soap, and re-filled with holy water on a regular basis. Please note that old holy water should be disposed of in the sacrarium.
- The distribution of the Precious Blood for the faithful is **suspended**, with the exception of those who must receive from the cup due to medical reasons. The faith of the Church teaches that Christ, whole and entire, is received even under only one species.
- The exchange of the Sign of Peace is to be offered without any physical contact. If the priest celebrant chooses to extend the invitation for the sign of peace, the faithful, instead of a handshake, may bow to the persons nearby.
- While the faithful retain the option of receiving Holy Communion on the tongue or in the hand, all ministers of Holy Communion are advised to distribute the consecrated hosts with care, being cautious not to touch the tongue or the hand of the communicant. Ministers should also wash their hands before Mass in preparation for the distribution of consecrated hosts.