

MEMORANDUM

To: All Pastors and Administrators

From: The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano
Bishop of Burlington

Date: October 27, 2009

Re: H1N1 Virus

Noting recent developments concerning the outbreak of H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu), the following protocols for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass are herewith stipulated after consultation with and the support of the Diocesan Presbyteral Council convoked on October 27, 2009. To this end, I am asking all parishes and institutions to note the following **obligatory** precautions to assure the safety of all the worshipping community, which remain in effect until further notice:

1) The Holy Water fonts are to be drained, cleaned with a 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.

2) The faithful should be reminded that holding hands during the recitation of the Our Father is **not** a part of the Roman Rite and it is **not indicated** in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. In the Pastoral Letter that I issued on August 15, 2006, entitled: ***Gift of Life, Gift Eternal: The Most Holy Eucharist and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass***, I noted: “First, regarding *The Lord’s Prayer*, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* simply states that the celebrant invites the faithful to join in the prayer ‘and all the faithful say it with him.’ There is *no mention* of holding hands during the prayer.” (Cf. p. 20). **This practice is to cease.**

3) **Holy Communion is to be given under the one species of the Host**, containing the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. Again, I quote from my Pastoral Letter: “...as relates to the distribution of Holy Communion under both species, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* states: ‘Above all, they (the pastors) should instruct the faithful that the Catholic faith teaches that Christ, whole and entire, and the true Sacrament, is received even under only one species, and consequently that as far as the effects are concerned, those who receive under only one species are not deprived of any of the grace that is necessary for salvation.’ (*General Instruction of the Roman*

Missal, No. 81).” (Cf. Pastoral Letter, pp. 20-21). In instances where parishioners are afflicted with Celiac disease, the priest should offer the person the appropriate provision for receiving the special host for these cases or setting aside a chalice with the precious blood.

4) The faithful should be instructed to offer the Sign of Peace with a simple nod or bow of the head, and simply say: “Peace be with you,” and the response of the other being: “And also with you.” The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* also states that after the priest has said to the faithful “The peace of the Lord be with you always,” and the faithful have responded, “And also with you,” the priest, “when appropriate,” may add: “Let us offer each other the sign of peace.” (Cf. *Instruction*, p. 64; also Pastoral Letter, p. 20). Thus, the exchange of peace may for good pastoral reasons be eliminated.

5) Priests, deacons and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should be especially reminded of the need to practice good hygiene. All distributing Holy Communion must wash their hands thoroughly before Mass begins. 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. Also, the number of extraordinary ministers should be monitored to avoid a number that exceeds the actual pastoral need of the community.

6) Following Mass, and subsequent to the purification of the sacred vessels by the priests or deacons, all vessels should be cleansed with hot water and soap.

7) Greeters at the doors of the Church should avoid shaking hands when there is the danger of transmitting the influenza.

During this time, our people should be encouraged to offer prayer, by faithful attendance at Holy Mass, for those afflicted by this illness and for all public health officials as they guide us in eradicating this threat. At the same time, parishioners should be reminded that if they are ill or suspect that they are ill with a contagious illness, they are not bound by the Sunday Mass obligation. They should remain at home and return to church when they are well.

Be assured that all are remembered in my prayers, asking the Lord to heal His people and make us strong in His name.