

R.C. Catholic Diocese of Syracuse
Information and Recommendations-Swine Flu

Recent concerns in regards to the spread of Swine flu has moved the State of New York to a heightened surveillance stage and warrants our issuing of this document to remind everyone at our Parishes, Schools and all locations to be aware of the signs and symptoms of this flu, and to take reasonable and necessary precautions to secure our continued good health and safety. The following are bulleted recommendations which should be shared with everyone who uses parish and diocese facilities for worship, work and service:

- The symptoms of Swine flu are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with the Swine flu.
- Swine flu, as most flu viruses, spreads mainly from person to person through the coughing and sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose. Some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, phones, or almost any surface. Infected people may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 7 or more days after becoming sick. This means you could pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.
- At this point, we believe continued participation in parish and school activities can continue, but all locations should be alert to and aware of any new bulletins and instructions provided by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and your local county, state or municipal officials.
- At Masses, the distribution of the Cup and the continued use of holy water fonts in the church should be reviewed and reconsidered as we monitor the spread and status of the Swine flu. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops website www.usccb.org has a link which provides 10 questions and answers in regards to the liturgical implications of the transmissions of pathogens. We recommend that you review it. The link is: <http://usccb.org/liturgy/swineflu.shtml>
- To minimize the chance of picking up or spreading bacteria, hands should be washed often. Washing thoroughly with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds is ideal. Carrying and using a hand sanitizer is encouraged.

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- We ask that administrators and teachers in our schools and religious education classes encourage healthy actions and be alert to any students that may show any symptoms of the flu. Children should not be allowed to attend classes if they are sick or there is any concern that they are coming down with an illness. Some students may have underlying medical conditions which might be exacerbated or may make them more susceptible to the flu virus. It is important that parish or school administrators identify and monitor these students closely during a potential flu outbreak. School administrators should be aware of any requirements in regards to notifying local and State health authorities of any cases of the flu.
- Students at our schools and religious education classes should be reminded to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues. Having a box of tissues and hand sanitizers available in every classroom is recommended.
- Parish Pre-K and Day Care activities should be closely monitored and extra care made to control contact among the participants. Teachers and assistants must be alert to any symptoms of illness. Special care should be given to disinfect all surfaces, toys and playground equipment.
- As we continue to monitor the spread and status of this flu, the parish should consider the need to cancel parish meetings and activities and should have an effective system in place to communicate any cancellations or changes.
- We ask that special attention be given to cleaning and sanitizing all surfaces of parish and school buildings that would commonly be touched by anyone, including door surfaces and hardware, pews, music books, office furniture and equipment, phone, computers and related items.
- Overall, we must all be constantly aware of how germs can easily be spread and avoid any circumstances that enables flu bacteria to be transferred from person to person.
- IF YOUR PARISH OR SCHOOL TAKES ANY PREVENTIVE ACTIONS, including CLOSING a building or CANCELLING parish or school events, please notify Danielle Cummings of the Communications Office at 315-470-1476 or email at daniellecummings@att.net and also advise Jim Merrill in Risk Management at 315-470-1496 or email jmerrill@syracusediocese.org