

COMMUNIQUÉ

To: Those responsible for parishes, permanent deacons, pastoral associates
From: + Paul Marchand, S.M.M.
Subject: H1N1 Virus

Dear collaborators,

Many initiatives are currently being taken in our country to prevent and control a new outbreak and spread of the H1N1 virus. Several dioceses have already followed suit by acting on different ways of carrying out some practices in our assemblies that could promote the spread of the virus such as: the handshake at the sign of peace, communion under the species of wine, water in the holy water fonts where people dip their finger or hand, etc.

In the last month, several parishes and an impressive number of individuals in our diocese have asked me to provide clear directives on this subject because of the present circumstances. After reflection and consultation I believe that the time has come to act. Therefore, effective November 1, 2009 and until further notice:

1. **The sign of peace ‘by means of a handshake’** will be suspended, allowing for other gestures that can equally well signify the peace that Christ brings to us and that we wish to share with others. I’m thinking of a nod of the head with a smile; a wave of the hand and a wink, etc.

2. Communion ‘**under the species of wine**’ will also be suspended.

Note: I leave it to those responsible for parishes to judge if the time has come to urge *all* people to receive communion in the hand... It is difficult for the one giving communion to avoid touching the tongue of the person who asks for communion on the tongue. Think about it!

3. **Holy water ‘in the fonts’** at the doors of the church will also be removed. This is a good opportunity to put more emphasis on the sprinkling during the penitential rite and to explain its meaning again.

It goes without saying that these changes will require a few explanations on your part or even a short catechesis. The natural phenomenon of resistance to change may enter into consideration. But I think that the great majority of people will be happy to be reminded that our Church is part of everyday life, that no one is sheltered from the germs and viruses that circulate around us and that every effort to prevent their spread is legitimate and commendable.

Thank you for your collaboration. I am always appreciative of your wonderful pastoral work.

Looking forward to seeing you again,

+ Paul Marchand, S.M.M.
Bishop of Timmins