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**Title \***

Thoughts on the "Swine Flu" Fright in Our Nation

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THOUGHTS ON THE "SWINE FLU" FRIGHT IN OUR NATION

Folks have legitimate concerns about a potential "Swine flu" pandemic and I hope that the Church can encourage confidence during these times. I would offer these liturgical guidelines for all the faithful, and particularly for those who are responsible for public worship.

ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO GO TO CHURCH.

As long as people are feeling well, we should all continue to worship as usual. Take the normal precautions if you or a family member is ill (i.e. stay home).

THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

A handshake or hug is not mandated by the Church and should possibly be discouraged during this time. Continue to verbally share the Peace of our Lord. Making eye contact, slightly bowing your head, or a friendly wave are good substitutes for the traditional handshake or hug.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Please remind people that they make a full communion by receiving in one kind. For those who are concerned, they receive Christ's Presence in the holy bread and need not receive "in both kinds" during times of illness.

The Common Cup: Medical experts agree that the danger of transmitting communicable diseases by sharing the chalice is negligible. History has borne this out and we still encourage this ancient liturgical practice. Lay Eucharistic Ministers should be sure to wipe the rim of the chalice and turn it after each person has received.

Intinction poses a greater potential threat, especially when the host is dipped into the chalice by the communicant themselves. This practice should be discouraged during this period.

Clergy and Eucharistic ministers are encouraged to wash their hands and use an anti-bacterial gel before administering the Holy Communion.

If members of your congregations fall ill please remember them in your prayers and perhaps with a telephone call. Above all, let us use common sense and all will be well.

May God bless us all and continue to fill us with Easter joy!

The Rt. Rev. Rodney R. Michel

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