

H1N1 recommendations implemented across diocese as of Oct. 24-25, 2009 weekend

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON – Temporary measures to help stop the spread of influenza are being implemented in parishes across the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon beginning the weekend of Oct. 24-25.

Acting on the recommendations of a local committee examining issues related to H1N1 flu, Diocesan Administrator Very Rev. Ron Beechinor announced guidelines to parish leaders attending diocesan Study Days in Saskatoon.

Communion from the common cup will be suspended, as will the exchange of the sign of peace. The traditional handshake will not be replaced with any other gesture, said Beechinor.

The holy water will be temporarily removed from the fonts at the entrances of Roman Catholic churches in the diocese, and welcomers at parish liturgies will not offer a handshake as an expression of greeting.

The reception of communion on the tongue will be “temporarily and gently” discouraged to respect the health safety of both the recipient and the minister of the Eucharist.

All ministers of the bread should be seen by the congregation to be cleaning their hands with some form of effective hand sanitizer just prior to distribution of community, state the guidelines.

And finally, all multiple baptisms will be celebrated with the pouring of baptismal water, rather than immersion.

These procedures will remain in effect until officially revoked, Beechinor said.

The committee preparing the guidelines included Leah Perrault, Director of Pastoral Services; Abbot Peter Novocosky, OSB, member of the diocesan Liturgy Commission; Monica Beavis, consultant in human resources for Nightingale Nursing and former CEO of Saskatchewan Catholic Health Corporation; and Ethna Martin, Parish Nurse at St. Philip Neri parish in Saskatoon.