

## **Swine Flu & The Church**

25 November 2009

Bishop Declan wrote to all parishes in our diocese today with further swine flu guidance. This is what he wrote:

“In the past months due to the swine flu pandemic, it has been recommended that Holy Communion be received under one form and the Sign of Peace should be given by a smile, a slight bow or some other appropriate gesture, but not by the shaking of hands.

“The guidelines were made out of particular pastoral concern for the vulnerable, namely, expectant mothers, the elderly, children and those with underlying health problems.

“I would like to thank everyone for following these guidelines. I am sure this has had an effect on reducing the spread of the virus. From correspondence I have received I know some people have not found these temporary changes easy.

“With the continuing vaccination programme I think we can amend the guidelines and return to the practice of receiving Holy Communion under both kinds and exchanging the Sign of Peace with a handshake or other suitable ways.

“Of course parish communities should continue to be vigilant about any local outbreak of swine flu. I believe that parish priests are best placed to know when it would be prudent to follow the previous guidelines and reintroduce them if necessary.

“Should parishioners still feel uncomfortable about receiving from the chalice, then they must feel free to make the choice not to do so. It may be helpful to remind people the Church teaches that when we receive the consecrated Host we are receiving sacramentally the gift of the Lord, whole and entire, body, blood, soul and divinity. However, the Church also teaches that it is a fuller sign when Holy Communion is received under both kinds.

“Please continue to pray for people working in the health service during this time.”

*cliftondiocese.com*