



## Thoughts from the Tower

Now that the Flu season is upon us, please allow me to address the rather mundane but important issue of how we can best protect our fellow parishioners as we assemble each week at the Lord's Table.

There are three important issues:

- The Sign of Peace - If you feel "under the weather," greet your neighbor in the pew with a smile and / or bow. Don't extend your hand.

And don't take offense if the person next to you doesn't take your proffered hand. He or she is being kind to you by not sharing their germs. This, of course, applies not just to the Sign of Peace but to all greetings.

- Receiving Holy Communion from the chalice - A number of years ago, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention gave an opinion that Christians do not put themselves at any serious risk of contracting illness by receiving from the chalice at celebrations of the Eucharist. As you know, our faith holds that while the wine, by the power of the Holy Spirit, becomes in its essence the Blood of Christ, in its tangible form it remains wine – with all its alcoholic properties. That alcohol is a good protection on the lip of the chalice from the transmission of disease. Some Christians returned to the original practice of receiving from the chalice as far back as the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Medical knowledge was very limited in those days, but there is no record of thousands of Protestants dying each year from sharing the chalice! So Catholics should not fear now that our church has revived this ancient practice. At the same time, if you are feeling ill, receive under the form of bread only.

- Receiving Holy Communion on the tongue - While most of our parishioners receive the Bread of Life on the hand, some retain the practice of receiving directly on the tongue. Roman Catholic practice allows either way. However reception on the tongue, if one is not careful, does run the risk of spreading disease. Here there is no alcohol to mitigate the possibility of spreading disease through saliva. If a communicant's tongue or lips touch the fingers of the minister, then the next several people on line – no matter which way they receive – will be contacted by whatever is in that saliva. What I'm about to write now is perhaps offensively earthy, but it needs to be said. If your custom is to show respect for the Eucharist by receiving on the tongue, allow me to offer two possibilities during flu season. Either switch to receiving in the hand until Easter or, if you continue to receive on the tongue, please open your mouth wide, stick out your tongue a good ways and don't bring back your tongue or close your mouth until you are sure that the Eucharistic minister has pulled back his/her hand. And please don't be insulted if the priest, deacon, or lay minister asks you to stick out your tongue further. They're simply seeking to protect your fellow parishioners behind you on line.

Well, enough of this! But I do hope it will be helpful as we all seek to get through another flu season. And get your flu shot!

*Father Donald*