

THE THERE ARE NO STUPID QUESTIONS COLUMN

Question: In light of discussion concerning the 'flu, do you think it possible to get ill from receiving Communion?

Answer: This is a timely question and one that touches the anxieties of a number of people. There is a simple, faith-based answer: no one ever got ill from participating in the Body and Blood of Christ, 'the medicine of immortality' (as holy communion is called in our prayers) - unless of course they receive communion unworthily - cf. 1 Corinthians 11:27 - 30. We receive communion for our health and salvation.

In almost 2000 years of far worse things - real plagues and epidemics - let alone the annual regular cycles of colds and flus - it does not seem that communion has had any discernable impact on the transmission of disease via communion. After all, if communion were a vehicle of disease you would think the clergy would have been getting sick all the time and dropping like flies, since they have to consume the chalice etc....

However - I think it a blessing that this simple, faith-based answer can be augmented by some information from a medical perspective. I have attached to this column a reflection written several years ago by a friend who is a doctor in one of our parishes. (This article is on page three of the Messenger.)

I myself still think that the best - the most appropriate, the most loving - preventative practice is for you and your children to stay away from gathering at the church and parish center if you are sick with a contagious disease or feel that you are coming down with something. This is better for you - rest is best! - and better for the people you would have had contact with if you went out while sick - and better for the anxieties and scruples of your brothers and sisters in Christ. The clergy will be happy to minister to you as a shut-in at home, if necessary.

Fr. Andrew