



September 17, 2020

Dear Archdiocese community,

We have faced unprecedented challenges this year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Loved ones have sickened and, in some cases died. We have had to adjust to drastic changes in the way we live our lives. As Catholics committed to defending life, we are called to take responsibility for the welfare and safety of our community. This year, that means wearing a mask, washing our hands and taking other precautions to prevent the spread of this deadly virus.

Archdiocese of Chicago personnel have worked hard these past few months to plan and execute preventive measures so we could open our churches and schools safely. All our hard work might have less impact though, if we don't take one more step and get our influenza immunizations as soon as possible.

While it's known as the common flu, there's really nothing common about influenza in 2020. Without a doubt, this will be the most important flu shot you will ever receive. In the coming weeks, we will witness a convergence of both viruses – influenza and COVID-19. Common flu symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat and extreme fatigue are similar to COVID-19 symptoms. Health care providers can become overwhelmed by patients mistaking one infection for the other.

Influenza can be, in itself a serious illness. More than 200,000 Americans are hospitalized each year with the flu. While most people recover completely in one to two weeks, some develop very serious and potentially life-threatening complications such as pneumonia. Over the past decade, influenza and pneumonia have been linked to an annual average of 3,500 deaths in Illinois, alone.

Nobody likes getting shots. I certainly don't, but I got mine this month. Getting a flu shot is easy and inexpensive and it is recommended for just about everyone, even children over the age of six months. It's available free through most insurance plans and public health clinics. You can find a vaccine provider near you by visiting [vaccinefinder.org](https://www.vaccinefinder.org).

Let's roll up our sleeves and take this simple step. You may save a life. You will certainly help make this unprecedented year less deadly for our community.

My prayers are with all of you and particularly with those who have suffered illness and loss. And I ask that you pray for me.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Blase Card. Cupich".

Blase Cardinal Cupich