

## Keeping Healthy

Just before Christmas I had the occasion to do some grocery shopping at a local market. As I took one of the shopping carts I noticed a dispenser with a sanitizer cloth that was to be used to wipe off baby seats or cart handles. What a great idea and what a great service!

This is the “season” for upper respiratory infections (URIs), what we commonly refer to as a “cold.” Cold viruses are airborne—that is, they float around in the air and we breathe them in, but our bodies do a fairly good job of protecting us from them most of the time. Where we do pick up these viruses and infect ourselves is from droplet contact—that is, someone sneezes in our face, someone with a cold blows his or her nose and then those contaminated hands touch something, such as a shopping cart handle and thus the virus is passed along to the next person.

We can really help protect ourselves from these URIs by a few simple practices, chief among which is washing our hands. We really do not wash our hands often enough, nor long enough when we do wash them. Rinsing them off under tepid water without soap and some good friction is not going to do the job. WASH them. Better yet, get some of the alcohol-based hand wash used in hospitals (available in any drugstore), keep it with you, and use it on your hands every couple of hours. In between, keep your hands away from your nose and mouth. It’s amazing how many folks do their best thinking chewing on a fingernail!

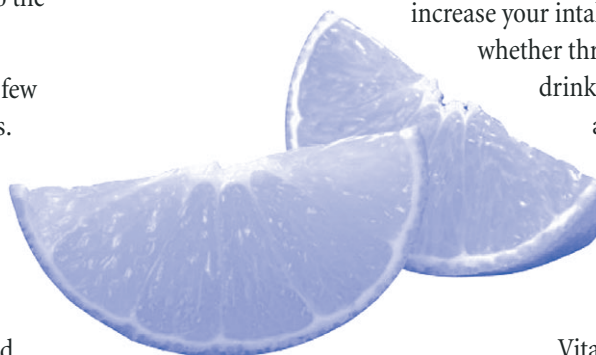
The Coachella Valley is a desert. Deserts are dry year around. We are all aware of the need for water during the hot summer months, but we also need to be well-hydrated during the winter.

Hydrated bodies work better. Dry nasal passages, for example, do not protect against viruses as well as they should.



We also need to rest appropriately. Most older people manage this pretty well, but the younger members of the parish are in the candle-burning at both ends mode and don’t get enough sleep. Without adequate sleep, the body’s defenses weaken and here comes that URI! It’s like the body is going to figure out a way to make you rest, even if that means getting you sick!

Remember to eat a proper diet. Especially increase your intake of Vitamin C, whether through eating or drinking citrus or taking a pill. It may not be scientific, but hefty doses of Vitamin C really do seem to ameliorate colds. Vitamin C is water soluble, so any excess in the body is easily excreted.



Finally, be responsible when you are not feeling well. Keep those viruses home. Coughing and sneezing in church, at work or at school is beneficial to no one. Be thankful that the usual length of time for an active cold is five to seven

days. If you develop a high fever (over 101.5 for an adult), or have other troubling symptoms like a really bad sore throat or an earache, be sure and check with your doctor.