

Dear Parish Family,

Since the obligation to attend Mass has returned to the Saginaw Diocese, and since the pandemic is still in the minds of faithful, I want to take this opportunity to refresh us all in the norms for receiving Holy Communion at Mass. In properly presenting ourselves to receive the Eucharist we are both better disposed in terms of spirituality and sanitation. I am in no way passing judgment on anyone with this refresher. This is simply to help us be more reverent toward the greatest gift God gives us.

Reception from the Chalice is still suspended in our diocese, and pretty much around the world at this point. This, however, does NOT mean that we are limited in receiving Communion. The two forms under which the Eucharist is present are both equally the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ: the Doctrine of Concomitance. When one receives only a Sacred Host, one is receiving a full Communion. Likewise, if one, under different circumstances, is only able to receive from the Chalice, one receives a full Communion. For example, in my last year at seminary I had an abscessed tooth that was extremely sensitive to pain for about a week. During that time I only received from the Chalice at Mass so as not to risk accidental abuse, if the Sacred Host hit that tooth. During that time I was receiving a full Communion, just as how all who are only receiving a Sacred Host do now.

When we receive a Sacred Host the Church permits us to do so either on the tongue or in the hand, but whichever we choose we are to do so with REVERENCE. This is not something to do with half-heartedness. Receiving the Eucharist properly is part of the full, and active participation in the liturgy we are called to exercise.

When it comes to receiving in the hand please remember the words of St. Cyril of Jerusalem: "*When you approach, take care not to do so with your hand stretched out and your fingers open or apart, but rather place your left hand as a **throne** beneath your right, as befits one who is about to receive the King. Then receive him, taking care that nothing is lost.*" If you are left handed, feel free to reverse that part. The remainder is a timeless instruction. Make your hand into a throne, keep it flat and steady, and prepare to receive the King. When one receives with curled up fingers, or angled hands it makes it very difficult to properly place the Eucharist there. Such practice also increases the risk of contact. So please be mindful to put forth the effort to receive by the saint's instructions. If you have difficulty doing so due to a medical condition, or due to tending to small children, I strongly urge you to receive on the tongue. Before and after consumption check to see if any small particles are also on your hands, and make sure to consume them. Those small particles are also fully Jesus!

When receiving on the tongue, please stick out your tongue! Do not be a vending machine where I need to place Our Blessed Lord on your tongue as if I'm placing a quarter in a slot! It is not rude to stick out your tongue fully at a priest in this circumstance! The clearer the landing pad for the Eucharist, the less of a chance for accidental abuse & unsanitary contact.

Next, I have had the opportunity to attend Mass around the world. The way the English speaking world gets in an orderly line is wholly unique to it. In Latin America, Italy, and Palestine no such order is practiced. Folks simply get up and go to the priest when they are good and ready to do so. This helps draw attention off of those who choose to abstain from Communion. It also helps parents of small children. One will go up to receive, while the other remains in the pew with the young ones. Upon returning, the other parent will go up to receive. This reduces the risk of dropping a host when wrangling children, and I strongly encourage this practice, if such parents wish to receive on their hands. This method also can help with the

recommendations of the diocese that those receiving on the tongue wait until the end of distribution to go up. So, know that I will remain at my station until there are no more communicants approaching me from now on. I'm not going to insist on an orderly line anymore. Just be mindful of others.

In conclusion, all the studies I am aware of have concluded that any difference of risk of transmitting germs between receiving on one's tongue or hands is negligible. In fact, I know that I am personally far less likely to make contact with another, if one receives on the tongue.

God be with all of you as the mission of the Church continues: the salvation of souls through the grace of Jesus Christ!

prayers,

Rev. Edwin C. Dwyer, JCL