

The Dilemma of Holy Communion in a Time of Pandemic

Since my arrival the most common discussions I have had with you is the dilemma of receiving Holy Communion in this time of the corona virus pandemic. This question falls into two or three general areas of concern. The first is whether we should be “allowing” the reception of Communion on the tongue. The protocols we received were quite clear that we should be discouraging reception on the tongue, but that we should not refuse those who choose to receive on the tongue. That creates the dilemma that some people will not receive Communion at all if they cannot receive on the tongue, while others will not receive at all if someone in front of them receives on the tongue. Trying to take both of these points of view into consideration, I am proposing the following solution. When someone receives Holy Communion on the tongue, I will ask the distributor or the priest to sanitize their hands after distributing to someone receiving on the tongue.

A second general concern is the touching of people during the distribution of Holy Communion. The protocols are very clear that whenever the person distributing Holy Communion touches someone, they must sanitize their hands before distributing to the next person. In giving blessings to those not receiving, we will not touch the person but rather just raise our hand and give the blessing.

A third concern is more difficult to respond to. There are many who think that the proximity of the distributor and the person receiving is too close. The words spoken by both pose the danger of transmission of the virus through airborne vapor and droplets. To reduce this risk the distributor must wear a mask. The protocols do not allow for a silent distribution with no spoken offering and response. The best solution to this issue, although not ideal, is for each person to judge the risk they are taking and to make the decision that most suits their own safety and health. If you are not comfortable receiving Holy Communion you shouldn't.

As always, we encourage the use of masks at Mass for the protection of the health of our brothers and sisters, and remind you to maintain proper social distancing while attending Mass. I understand that these measures are difficult and sometimes irritating to us, but we are trying to continue to be nourished by the Eucharist and to protect our brothers' and sisters' health at the same time.

I will be communicating with our extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to remind them of these practices, and pray that God will soon bring through these difficult times.

Fr. Tony Stubeda

