

# The Distribution of Holy Communion

*As many of you realize, Bishop Barres has given permission for Holy Communion to be distributed once again at weekday and weekend Masses, funerals, etc. Since we continue to live with the reality of the COVID-19 virus, it is of course imperative that this important step in our worship life be undertaken with the utmost consideration for the health and safety of both parishioners and those ministering the sacrament. The Bishop's office has issued very detailed directives to the parishes of our Diocese, and the procedure we will follow is outlined below (perhaps in greater detail than you care to see!). Please do take time to read the guidelines carefully, and if you have questions, don't hesitate to contact Fr. Brian or one of the parish staff. As always, we are so very grateful for your cooperation and patience in this continually changing time.*

## **A. When will Holy Communion be Distributed?**

To reflect both the Church's great reverence for the Eucharist, while also providing appropriate precautions against infection, Bishop Barres has decided that **Holy Communion in the Diocese of Rockville Centre will be distributed after Mass has ended**. This decision may seem peculiar, but it has important advantages:

- ✓ Most importantly, it allows the priest, deacon, and Extraordinary Ministers to wear a mask during the distribution of the sacrament. The priest and other ministers in the sanctuary **are not to wear masks during the celebration of Mass**. But once Mass has ended, they *can* put on a mask or facial covering to further ensure their own safety, and that of the parishioners with whom they will be face to face.
- ✓ It allows those who have are **not** inclined to receive Holy Communion at this time to simply exit the church in a more comfortable and less obtrusive way.
- ✓ It also allows the priest to remove his chasuble (the outermost vestment) for the distribution of Holy Communion, given that it is difficult to launder if anyone should touch him, or sneeze or cough on him.

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## **B. What to Expect toward the End of the Mass**

1. Having recited or sung the "Lamb of God," the priest (and deacon) consumes the Eucharist in the usual way, but does not go on to distribute Communion. Rather, the newly consecrated hosts are briefly placed in the tabernacle, awaiting the conclusion of the Mass.
2. After the announcements, final blessing and dismissal, the priest remains in the sanctuary. Those who would like to leave without receiving Communion are now free to do so.

3. The priest (and other ministers distributing Holy Communion) use hand sanitizer before approaching the tabernacle and / or their Communion station. They also put on a surgical mask or cloth face covering.
4. The priest retrieves the newly consecrated hosts from the tabernacle and returns to the altar.
5. Holding up a single host, the priest says: *“Behold the Lamb of God. Behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.”* He then leads the people in saying: *“Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed.”*
6. The priest and other ministers (if needed) proceed to their stations for the distribution of Communion. Next to each minister is a small table, on which have been placed a corporal, an ablution cup or bowl with water, and hand sanitizer.

### C. Distribution of Holy Communion

1. To maintain proper social distancing, tape marks where people should stand or stop while on line for Communion are found on the floor. Please follow the instructions of our ushers in coming forward, row by row.
2. The procession for Communion should be a **single-file line in the center aisle**, beginning in the front of the church and moving to the back. As needed, single-file lines coming up the far side aisles will also be used.
3. Those receiving Communion should only remove or lower their facial coverings immediately before receiving the host.
4. The priest, deacon or other ministers may not wear gloves while distributing Holy Communion, nor may parishioners wear gloves as they receive. Gloves are not needed since the ministers have just sanitized their hands.
- 5.\*\* Those receiving Communion do so in the normal way. If the minister senses that his or her fingers have made contact with a person’s hand or mouth, he/she pauses, sets down the ciborium on the corporal, uses the ablution cup and then uses hand sanitizer. He/she may repeat this process as often as necessary until all have received. It is not necessary, however, for him/her to use hand sanitizer **between each communicant**, unless he/she makes physical contact.
- 7.\*\* In an attempt to minimize physical contact, those receiving Communion should extend their hands in the proper way, and as “flatly” as possible. Cupping one’s hands in not helpful.

Those receiving on the tongue (see Section D), should open their mouth wide and extend their tongue fully.

8. When distribution is finished, the priest and other ministers return the remaining hosts to the tabernacle.

9. Those who have received may depart after making a brief prayer of thanksgiving; there is no final blessing or dismissal, as these have already been imparted at the end of Mass.

#### **D. Communion on the Tongue**

1. Although one may receive either in the hand or on the tongue, the weight of medical opinion sought by the Diocese is that **it is safer to receive in the hand**. Therefore, those who normally receive on the tongue are *strongly urged to receive in the hand* for the time being. That being said, no one will be denied being able to receive on the tongue if they so choose.

2. Because reception on the tongue increases the likelihood of physical contact between the priest or minister and the communicant:

- (a) It is recommended that the minister use hand sanitizer after **each** communicant who receives on the tongue;
- (b) Those receiving on the tongue should wait to come forward **at the end of the Communion line**, since the priest will be needing to sanitize his hands between each individual; and
- (c) Those receiving on the tongue receive from **the priest only**, so that our Extraordinary Ministers are not placed in an uncomfortable position.

*Issued June 18, 2020*