

STATEMENT ON COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) AND THE RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION AT CELEBRATIONS OF THE MASS ACCORDING TO THE EXTRAORDINARY FORM

The Bishops of England and Wales have issued 'Guidelines' (dated 27th February 2020) on steps to be taken in parishes in relation to the possible spread of COVID-19 (the Coronavirus).

While noting that these guidelines do not take the form of a decree with the force of canon law, we welcome them. We should like to make the following clarifications on their application to celebrations of the Extraordinary Form and other traditional Rites and Usages of the Latin Church, such as the Dominican Rite.

1. In these celebrations the Sign of Peace is not given among members of the congregation; the Precious Blood is not distributed to the Faithful (from the Chalice); and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are not employed. In these respects these celebrations already adhere to or render unnecessary recommendations given in the Guidelines for a heightened level of hygiene necessary in the case of a more serious outbreak of the virus.
2. In these celebrations Holy Communion (the Host) **may not** be distributed in the hand, according to the universal liturgical law applicable to them. Should the spread of COVID-19 necessitate the suspension of the distribution of Holy Communion on the tongue, this would mean the suspension of the distribution of Holy Communion to the Faithful in these celebrations.

The Communion of the Faithful is in no way necessary to the validity or liceity (in such circumstances) of the Mass. Should prudence dictate the necessity for such a step, the Faithful should be encouraged to make a 'Spiritual Communion'. One form of words for making such a Spiritual Communion is given below.

3. We wish to observe, however, that the distribution of the Host in the hand does not appear to be less likely to spread infection than the distribution on the tongue. On the contrary, distribution on the hand has the result that the Host touches possibly infected surfaces, the palm of the left hand and the fingers of the right hand of the communicant, which is avoided in distribution by a priest directly onto the communicant's tongue.

The Guidelines state:

When giving communion in the hand seek to ensure you place the host in the hand of the recipient in such a way that you do not touch their hands.

In the same spirit the distribution of the Host on the tongue should never involve the touching of the communicant's tongue by the priest.

Instruction and training on the correct manner of distributing Holy Communion on the tongue, to those not used to this manner of distribution, may be useful in this context.

Issued by the Chairman and Officers of the Latin Mass Society, 3rd March 2020.

Further information

An Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that thou art present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love thee above all things, and I desire to receive thee in my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive thee sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace thee as if thou wert already there, and unite myself wholly to thee. Never permit me to be separated from thee. Amen.

The Latin Mass Society

The Latin Mass Society, founded in 1965, is an association of Catholic faithful dedicated to the promotion of the traditional Latin liturgy of the Catholic Church, the teachings and practices integral to it, the musical tradition which serves it, and the Latin language in which it is celebrated.

More information about the Society and its work can be found on its website:

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