

QA 061020

Q: Can an instrument (like a cotton ball) be used to anoint in Confirmation?

A: Before the pandemic, this wasn't really a question. It was allowed in the Anointing of the Sick, but the thought was that in Confirmation actual touch (the "laying on of hands" which happens at the anointing) was required. Given this debate, the US Bishops formally asked the Vatican for an answer to this question (what is called a *dubium*). By a letter dated June 2, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has replied as follows: "The use by the minister of an instrument (gloves, cotton swab...), does not affect the validity of the Sacrament." Our policy (which states no instrument is to be used) was written before getting this answer back. So, now, an instrument (like a cotton ball) may be used in Confirmation. A separate cotton ball should be used for each person being confirmed. The oil-soaked cotton balls are to be burned afterwards. The minister should use hand sanitizer before the rite, and again after washing any oil off his hands after the rite.