



REVEREND DANIEL B. CARSON

VICAR GENERAL AND MODERATOR OF THE CURIA

Questions About Receiving the Eucharist

It must be difficult for you as pastors and parish priests to not be able to feed your flock with the Body and Blood of Jesus, an act that is at the core of one's priesthood and ministry. With good and holy intentions, a number of priests are being approached by the faithful, asking to be able to receive the Eucharist on an ad hoc basis or to be provided a means to receive the Eucharist regularly (e.g., a drive-thru communion service or at the rectory or in the church during private prayer). As we have been asked many questions on this topic, I thought it would be good to address it to assist your flock in understanding the guidelines about receiving the Eucharist outside of Mass when public Masses are suspended.

Given the connection between the Eucharist and the Sacrifice of the Mass, the rites of the Church envision that the reception of the Eucharist outside of Mass is the exception, normally limited to Communion to the sick or utilizing a Liturgy of the Word in cases where the celebration Mass is not possible. At this time when public celebration of Mass is suspended, public celebrations of the Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion is also suspended. Therefore, the practice of distributing Holy Communion to the faithful on an individual, ad hoc basis (aside from pastoral care to the sick) is to be avoided.

Pastors are encouraged to communicate to their faithful the value of making a spiritual Communion. The graces of a sacramental Communion are present in a spiritual Communion: "[through] their desire for the sacrament in union with the Church, no matter how distant they may be physically, they are intimately and really united to her and therefore receive the fruits of the sacrament" even absent the sacramental sign (CDF, Letter to Bishops on Certain Questions Concerning the Minister of the Eucharist). It may also be helpful to see that embracing this cross of limited access to the Sacrament is our path to sanctity, an opportunity to die to ourselves and our desires – as faith-filled as they may be. For any further clarification, please contact Rev. Martino Choi, Director of the Office of Worship (ChoiM@adw.org, 301-853-4595).