

May 23, 2000: An essential step in the life of our community

Yesterday I received this notice from the archdiocesan Office of Worship:

*On or after Tuesday, May 26, the distribution of Holy Communion outside of Mass may begin. This decision about beginning this is left to the judgment of the pastor. If allowed, the guidelines for the distribution of Holy Communion during Mass are to be observed (such as, the use of masks and the sanitation of hands before and after Holy Communion is distributed.) Holy Communion may be distributed inside a sacred space, outside, or even at the home, as long as it can be done safely and with the utmost precaution. Holy Communion may now even be offered to those who are not attending public Mass for their safety and/or for the common good. The distribution of Holy Communion is to be done in a reverent way, and people are encouraged to prayerfully prepare themselves beforehand. With the permission of the pastor, Holy Communion may even be distributed to individuals at or in their residence and preferably by members of their household who are already extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and who use a pyx to do so. The archbishop has given permission to pastors to designate and train a Catholic in good standing to serve as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion in individual cases. See the Rite of Deputing a Minister to Distribute Holy Communion on a Single Occasion in Appendix III of the Roman Missal.*

This is what I have been waiting for. It is the “missing piece” of what I have thought all along would be necessary for keeping our sacramental life intact for the whole period of time it will take before all of us will be able to participate in the Eucharist together at its Sunday celebration. I encourage any parishioners who have a loved one at home who cannot take part in the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist to seriously consider being commissioned to take communion to their loved one at home. We will have enough pyxes (the small containers used to transport the Blessed Sacrament) on hand at church to make sure you have what you need to do so, and will provide the text of a simple communion service that you can use on the occasion.

I would like to be careful about coming to church to receive holy communion outside of Mass. There would have to be an obvious need, especially given that we will be offering Mass on weekdays and the possibility then of maintaining a safe distance from others is apparent in a church as big as ours. We will move forward “*safely and with the utmost precaution*” but will rejoice in the renewed possibility of participating in a fuller way in this “source and summit” of our Christian life.