



Office of the Bishop

Roman Catholic Diocese of Lubbock

April 22, 2020

Yesterday the Texas Attorney General published some further guidance for houses of worship in the state. He specifically references the following: "... a house of worship may, according to their faith practices, provide communion or a blessing through a similar drive-up service." I am asking that our parishes make preparations such that, if possible, beginning this weekend, April 25/26, Communion be made available to people at the conclusion of livestreamed Masses, or at the conclusion of Masses which might be offered outdoors (observing social distancing guidelines).

The best prevention of spread of the virus continues to be staying at home. Those over 60 years of age, or people with preexisting conditions which make them more vulnerable to the effects of the virus, should NOT attend church services at this time. Let me remind you that the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days has been dispensed until further notice. I am asking that those who will prudently be staying at home consider asking a family member or care giver to bring them Communion from church.

Let me also take this opportunity to advise all Catholics that the stipulation in Canon Law regarding making one's Easter Duty explicitly states that, in cases of sickness (which is the case for all of us in this pandemic situation), the need to receive Communion is extended beyond the Easter Season (defined in the U.S as First Sunday of Lent through Trinity Sunday) to within one year of the previous reception of Communion.

All those who will be coming to our church property to attend a parking lot or outdoor Mass or to receive Communion must be wearing masks. I am providing the Clergy of the Diocese with very specific instructions for the distribution of Communion. I must ask you to abide by those instructions even if that requires you to receive Communion in ways you are not accustomed to or which might not be your personal preference. These are extraordinary circumstances and all of us are being stretched beyond our comfort zone.

My instructions to the Faithful are as follows:

- All who will be involved in the distribution of Communion will be wearing masks and surgical gloves after sanitizing their hands.

- After the Final Blessing at Mass, the team of volunteer ministers of Communion will take the Eucharist out to people in their cars. Parishes may determine whether they will take Communion to the parked cars or have the cars drive up to the Communion minister. The Communion minister will ask each car how many hosts they need, including if the someone in the car is taking hosts to persons not able to attend. That number of hosts will be taken from the ciborium and placed into one of the small paper cups and handed to one person in the car, avoiding all physical contact. There will be a volunteer in the vicinity to collect the used paper cups into a paper grocery bag for burning later. If the cup is being taken home for distribution of Communion to the homebound, you are asked to burn the cup or bring it back the next Sunday for the parish to dispose of it.
- After the distribution of Communion, all who ministered Communion and all who assisted in any way with the distribution of Communion will adhere to strict sanitizing procedures. Surfaces in the church building will also be sanitized.

Some parishes might need to make use paper products other than cups for the distribution of Communion. Whatever paper product is used, it will be burned by the parish or, if taken home for distribution of Communion to those who stayed at home, it should be brought back to the church the following week or burned at home.

It is my personal, firm conviction that we need to continue being extremely cautious about the spread of the virus. I have consistently followed the directives of the civil authorities, and will continue to do so, even if I might personally disagree with some of the aspects of “reopening” which they might be implementing. I do anticipate further guidance being given by the authorities in the weeks to come, and will be updating the policies for the Diocese of Lubbock in accordance with their guidance.

I am grateful for the continued diligence on the part of our clergy in rendering pastoral service to our people. Please continue to keep them and all of our medical personnel in your prayers. I am hopeful that this might be a glimmer of Easter Hope for all of us.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Robert M. Coerver". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Most Rev. Robert M. Coerver

Bishop of Lubbock

April 22, 2020