



The Distribution of the Holy Communion Outside of Mass on Sundays During the Coronavirus Pandemic

When you look at the crucifix, you understand how much Jesus loved you then. When you look at the Sacred Host, you understand how much Jesus loves you now.
- St. Teresa of Calcutta

As the “source and summit” of the Christian life, the Eucharist is where we encounter the presence of Jesus himself. Due to the ongoing pandemic and the State of Wisconsin’s “Safer-at-Home” policies, many Catholics have been watching Mass livestreamed or recorded online. We strongly encourage them to continue doing so as we work to provide a safe way for the faithful to return to the sacrifice of the Mass. The Church is grateful to Her priests for working hard to keep prayer and communication as priorities during this time and to the faithful for their continued desire for the Eucharist.

Not only have Catholics been unable to celebrate the Mass as a community, they have also been unable to receive Holy Communion, since it has not seemed possible to do so given the grave concern over the spread of the virus. At the same time, we understand the desire of the faithful to receive the Eucharist and there is a precedent for doing so in extraordinary circumstances like these, even outside of Mass.

The solution the Church has provided, and the Diocese of Green Bay will implement in the short term, is a simple Communion Service where in reading briefly from the Word of God, praying the Lord’s Prayer together, and receiving the Eucharist the faithful will be sacramentally nourished. Naturally, Holy Communion is usually received during the celebration of the Mass. This is most fitting since the celebration of the Mass is intimately directed to the nourishment of God’s people with the Word of God and Holy Communion. Communion Services are never an alternative to the celebration of the Mass and must only be used for serious reasons. And the time in which we live, with a global pandemic which has led to thousands of deaths in our country, is a serious reason.

Although reception of Holy Communion outside of Mass is not a substitute for the participation in the Sacrifice of the Mass and does not fulfill the precept to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, given that the obligation to attend Sunday Mass has been temporarily dispensed at this time, the reception of Holy Communion outside of Mass will bring grace and comfort to the faithful. Thus, based on the desire of the faithful to receive Christ in the Eucharist, and the need to do so with proper precautions, the Diocese issues the following guidelines which will begin on Pentecost Sunday, May 31, 2020:

General Guidelines

1. Please note that the following Diocesan guidelines will be in place from the date they are issued regardless of changes in government directives until further guidelines are distributed.
2. Communicants who are able are strongly encouraged to participate spiritually at Mass by means of television, online, or radio before coming to a parish Communion Service. Those who are unable to do so are encouraged to read the Scripture readings of the day or pray a rosary or in some other way in preparation to receive Holy Communion.
3. Priests and pastoral leaders may now organize within their parish for groups of the faithful to receive Holy Communion outside of the Mass after 4pm on Saturday and again on Sunday. The priest or parish leader should arrange to begin admitting groups after the livestream Mass so that the Reception of Communion will have a connection to a Mass recently celebrated at the parish. Parishes that do not offer livestream or radio Masses are encouraged to begin distributing Holy Communion to groups after the Bishop's Mass on WFRV-Channel 5. The time-frame may be adapted to local circumstances but for now it must remain on Saturday evening and Sunday during the recommended time frames.
4. Priest may now also celebrate Masses with 8 or fewer members of the faithful during the weekdays, Monday through Saturday morning, following the safety precautions of this document and abiding by the restrictions of proper social distancing.
5. No more than nine people may be gathered at any one time in one room, including church personnel and ministers.
6. All parishes should carefully observe civil law and public health guidelines. Social distancing should be considered the norm.
7. Only the Precious Body may be distributed (i.e., no Precious Blood should be distributed). Low-Gluten hosts should also be made available for those with celiac disease if possible.
8. It is important to remember that no Catholic is required to receive Holy Communion during the pandemic. This permission is for those who desire to receive Holy Communion and can safely do so.
9. Those age 65 or above and those with compromised immunity are encouraged to stay home. Signage should be placed at the entrance of the church reminding those age 65 or above and anyone with compromised immunity that they are at an increased risk.
10. In Christian Charity, anyone with a fever, cough or flu like symptoms should remain at home so as to prevent further spread of the illness. It is strongly encouraged that those wishing to enter to receive Holy Communion should have their temperature taken to ensure that they do not have a fever, and all are strongly encouraged to wear a protective mask. All ushers assisting should wear a mask and abide by social distancing guidelines.
11. In the case that the presiding priest is at heightened risk due to age or pre-existing conditions he should not participate in the distribution of Holy Communion. Another priest, deacon, or a trained and approved Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, may assist the priest as needed. This person is also subject to the nine-or-fewer-persons rule.
12. No Ordinary or Extraordinary Minister is required to distribute Holy Communion if he/she thinks it puts his/her health seriously in jeopardy. For the same truly serious reason, priests may choose to ask the faithful to only receive Holy Communion in the hand during this time of pandemic. If members of the faithful do wish to receive on the tongue, and the extraordinary or ordinary minister is uncomfortable with this, another minister should be delegated to distribute on the tongue.

The Gathering

13. Only up to eight persons plus the distributing minister may be in the church at one time, which includes any usher directing the Communion line. Markings should be placed on the floor six feet apart to preserve social distancing for the Communion line.
14. Communicants are strongly urged to wear a suitable face covering which may be removed or adjusted for the reception of Holy Communion. The priest or other minister must also wear a mask. Holy Communion should not be distributed with the minister wearing gloves, nor should it be received in the hand if the communicant is wearing gloves. Hand hygiene is effective against the coronavirus, and therefore, gloves are not needed if the priest or minister performs proper hand hygiene. Eucharistic ministers will sanitize hands prior to and immediately after distribution of communion.
15. Doors/railings/pews or any other area where the public has had contact should be sanitized immediately while using disposable gloves after the service is complete with an appropriate strength cleaner. Gloves should be discarded after each cleaning. If reusable gloves are used, those gloves should be dedicated to cleaning and disinfection of surfaces for COVID-19 and should not be used for other purposes. Follow manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products for concentration, application method and contact time, etc. Do not use bleach on wood.
16. Meanwhile, those queued outside the church doors should do so with 6-feet between communicants who are not related or living together) waiting to enter the church *until they are welcomed in*. Doors should be propped open so as to eliminate contact. Hand sanitizer should be available and used as people enter and exit the church. If a parish uses hand sanitizer and tissues, there should be an open garbage receptacle available nearby.
17. Parishes should create a plan to orderly allow folks to queue.
18. The Sacrament of Confession and the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament should not occur during the time of distribution of Holy Communion, especially to keep the queue flowing in an orderly manner and to maintain civil restrictions on the number of persons present in a confined space. Proper signage should be prominently posted regarding alternative times for Confessions, Eucharistic Adoration, and the church being open for prayer.
19. Communicants are requested to receive Holy Communion at their usual parishes. If a parish is unable to offer Holy Communion, the pastor may want to collaborate with a nearby parish.

Distribution of Holy Communion

20. All sacred vessels containing the Precious Body are to remain covered until the time of reception of Holy Communion. Ministers of Holy Communion are to wash/sanitize their hands immediately before and after the distribution of Holy Communion, and at reasonable intervals or breaks, according to prudence, during the prolonged period of the Rite of Reception of Holy Communion. It may be prudent to have a small table with the proper items for sanitizing near the Communion station as well as with a corporal and sanitizer to place the ciborium on if needed.
21. There should be only one Communion line (with the minister preferably in the normal place near the altar in the center). There should not be any side-by-side communion lines. There should not be use of the communion rail for group reception of Holy Communion, especially with the requirement of social distancing. Holy Communion should be distributed only inside the church building.
22. Since there should be some prayer associated with the reception of Holy Communion, the priest is asked to abide by the rubrics provided for this liturgy. (Please see Appendix 1)

23. The minister should sanitize his/her hands by first rinsing off the loose particles with water into a bowl that will be poured down the sacrarium, and then by using hand sanitizer after each group.
24. The communicants may not stop or stay in the church prior to or after receiving Holy Communion. They should exit the church immediately after receiving Holy Communion (if possible, by another door than they entered). Communicants should not linger or socialize in the parking lot and should go immediately to their vehicle. Personal prayer may take place in their cars or at home.
25. Those who receive in the hand should consume their consecrated host in the presence of the minister. Those who receive on the tongue should open their mouths wide and tilt the head back slightly. If the minister accidentally comes into contact with the tongue or the hand of the recipient, he/she should pause, sanitize his/her hands, and then continue.
26. Consecrated hosts may not be taken outside of the church during this time.
27. Whenever possible prop open doors into the church to eliminate contact with the door. One set of doors should be designated as an entrance and another set – preferably in a separate area so crowds do not combine – should be designated as an exit. Although communicants should not ordinarily be using the restrooms, allowances should be made with proper safety precautions. Water fountains should also be disabled/covered up. No Holy Water should be in the fonts.

If parishes are not able to abide by these guidelines, they should refrain from the distribution of Holy Communion and consult with a neighboring parish for assistance.

Information on appropriate sanitation can be found at <https://wedc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19-General-Guidelines.pdf>

Communication

28. Parishes may determine how best to communicate and order this process and which hours they will offer Holy Communion within the suggested times. The organized, public distribution and reception of Holy Communion described here should not occur on other days of the week in order to decrease the risk as well as to honor Sunday as the Lord's Day.
 - i. Large parishes may want to invite sub-groups of the parish at different times, in a way that avoids any appearance of favoritism. For example, they may ask people with last names beginning with letters from A-D to come in the first hour, E-H in the second, and so forth. There are many other ways to order this, so parishes may do so in any fair and efficient way they see fit.
 - ii. Linked or merged parishes may wish to offer Holy Communion at each location if it can be efficiently and safely done.
29. A Webinar to answer questions for pastoral leaders and priests as well as a packet of information to share with your faithful will follow this communication.

Questions

Please contact Shaun Johnson in the Office of Divine Worship at 920-272-8311 or at sjohnson@gbdioc.org.

Appendix 1

Rite for the Distribution of Holy Communion¹

INTRODUCTORY RITE

When the first group to receive Holy Communion has assembled in the church, the minister says the following antiphon or another antiphon from no. 92 of *Pastoral Care of the Sick and Dying* [PC]. This may be repeated periodically (for example, hourly) or simply chanted or recited prior to the first group's reception of Holy Communion.

The altar candles may be lit.

**How gracious you are, Lord:
your gift of bread from heaven
reveals a Father's love and brings us perfect joy.
You fill the hungry with good things
and send the rich away empty.**

LITURGY OF HOLY COMMUNION

The Greeting, Lord's Prayer, and *Behold the Lamb of God*, should be said with each small group of Communicants.

Prior to the greeting all make the sign of the cross.

GREETING

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
And with your spirit.

LORD'S PRAYER

**Jesus taught us to call God our Father,
and so we have the courage to say:**

Our Father...

COMMUNION

The minister shows the Eucharistic Bread to those present, saying:

**Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who takes away the sins of the world.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.**

¹ Adapted from *Pastoral Care of the Sick and Dying*: Chapter 3, Communion in a Hospital or Institution. If circumstances allow, the pastor may celebrate the fuller "Rite of Distribution of Holy Communion Outside Mass" (see *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, chapter 1). Provided by the working group of the five Dioceses of Wisconsin.

And together with the people he says:

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof,
but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion is distributed to the people in the usual way. Communicants should exit the church after receiving Holy Communion.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

The concluding prayer may be prayed after the last group has received Holy Communion but before they exit the building, or it may be said periodically during the day, especially if the Sacrament will be reposed for a brief time. Additional prayers may be found at PC 96.

Let us pray.

Pause for silent prayer.

**All-powerful and ever-living God,
may the Body and Blood of Christ your Son
be for our brothers and sisters
a lasting remedy for the body and soul.**

Through Christ our Lord.

There is no blessing or dismissal.