



**MARCVS**  
DEI ET APOSTOLICAE SEDIS GRATIA  
**EPISCOPVS LOIDENSIS**

To our beloved brothers in Christ

**RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION 'ON THE TONGUE' DURING THE PERIOD OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Now that many of our churches have re-opened<sup>1</sup> for the celebration of the liturgy with the presence of the faithful during the current pandemic, I have been asked for clarification about requests made to clergy by individual members of the faithful to receive Holy Communion on the tongue.

Notwithstanding the right<sup>2</sup> of the faithful to receive Holy Communion on the tongue, I earnestly encourage all those desiring to receive Holy Communion to do so by receiving the Sacred Host reverently in the hand until the risk of the transmission of the Covid-19 coronavirus has been sufficiently mitigated in our country. In doing so, I ask<sup>3</sup> them to make this act of charity mindful of *"the common good of the Church (the prevention of viral transmission of Covid-19)<sup>4</sup>, the rights of others (to be protected from the possibility of infection) and their own duties towards others (particularly, the prevention of viral transmission to those distributing Holy Communion)."5*

Nevertheless, a member of the faithful must not be denied<sup>6</sup> Holy Communion should they insist on their right to receive the Sacred Host on the tongue. However, the current Government guidance which has enabled us to re-open our churches safely for public worship also clearly indicates that, during a religious service for communal worship, a 'consumable' should be placed, *"into the hand only"7.*

Therefore, to ensure that we act in a way which protects the common good, respects the rights of other members of the faithful, is in accordance with the Government's health guidance, and provides the necessary mitigating safety measures: Holy Communion should be distributed to those wishing to receive the Sacred Host on their tongue only when the celebration of Mass has been concluded.

To provide for this, I Decree that:

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<sup>1</sup> *Diocese of Leeds - Guidance for the Celebration of Mass: During the Covid19 coronavirus Pandemic from 4 July 2020, published 30 June 2020 and as revised 5<sup>th</sup> August 2020*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Redemptionis Sacramentum* §92

<sup>3</sup> Can. 223 §2, *Code of Canon Law*

<sup>4</sup> The text in parentheses has been inserted by to explain the interpretation of this Canon from the *Code of Canon Law* within the context of the current pandemic

<sup>5</sup> Can. 223 §1, *Code of Canon Law*

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Redemptionis Sacramentum* §91

<sup>7</sup> *COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic* (England), Updated 27 July 2020

1. Members of the faithful who have indicated their desire to receive Holy Communion only on the tongue should be advised personally to wait in their seats in the church (with face coverings on) after the dismissal at the end of Mass, and to remain there until other members of the faithful have exited the church premises.
2. The Priest, Deacon or Extraordinary Minister should wear a face covering and thoroughly wash and sanitise their hands with alcohol sanitiser. After taking the ciborium or paten containing the Blessed Sacrament from the Tabernacle, the minister should place the sacred vessel on the altar and remove its cover. The minister should then sanitise their hands again with alcohol sanitiser prior to distributing Holy Communion.
3. The faithful wishing to receive on the tongue should come forward (still wearing their face covering) to receive Holy Communion when invited to do so by the Priest, Deacon or Extraordinary Minister. The physical arrangements determined by the Parish Priest for the distribution of Holy Communion in these circumstances should seek to maximise the distance between minister and communicant, between each communicant, and where possible to minimise movement.
4. At the moment immediately before receiving Holy Communion (when the minister holds the Sacred Host above the ciborium or paten), the communicant should remove their face covering. The minister should ensure they place the Sacred Host on the tongue of the communicant in such a way that they do not touch the communicant's tongue or mouth. The communicant should then replace their face covering after receiving Holy Communion.
5. As with the arrangements for the distribution of Holy Communion in the hand, Communion given on the tongue should be distributed in silence with no dialogue between minister and communicant<sup>8</sup>.
6. As the risk of the COVID-19 viral infection is known to be transmitted through the minute water droplets (aerosols) which are produced in the air when infected people exhale, and the distance between minister and communicant will be less than from those receiving in the hand, the minister of Holy Communion must cleanse their hands again with alcohol sanitiser immediately after administering the Sacred Host to each communicant receiving on the tongue. This will necessitate briefly replacing the ciborium or paten containing the Blessed Sacrament on the altar between the distribution of Holy Communion to each communicant.
7. As well as sanitising their hands immediately after distributing Holy Communion to each communicant, Priests, Deacons and Extraordinary Ministers should wash their hands thoroughly and cleanse them again with alcohol sanitiser as soon as possible after the conclusion of the distribution of Communion.
8. The provisions above may also be used by priests celebrating the Extraordinary Form of Mass to distribute Holy Communion when the Mass has concluded and after those who do not wish to receive Holy Communion have exited the church.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. '7.5 The Communion Rite', *Diocese of Leeds - Guidance for the Celebration of Mass* (see <sup>1</sup> above)

At all times, Priests, Deacons and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should remain mindful of their own personal health conditions with respect to their potential exposure to the Covid-19 coronavirus. It is strongly advised that those in the 70+ age group, and those who are vulnerable to infection, do not distribute Holy Communion either in the hand or on the tongue but delegate this to another minister who has been properly instructed with all of the requirements contained in the Church's guidance during the pandemic.

Given at Leeds on the 5<sup>th</sup> August in the Year of Our Lord 2020



*+ Marcus Stock*

✠Right Reverend Marcus Stock  
Bishop of Leeds

*Sean Crowley*

Rev Fr Sean Crowley  
Notary