

Guidelines on Sacraments and Pastoral Care

*Working Group on Infectious Disease Protocols for Sacraments & Pastoral Care*¹

Updated July 24, 2020

Celebration of Public Masses

July 2020 Update: *This document has been updated to reflect the rising and falling levels of infection and of subsequent restrictions, in the U.S. and in other jurisdictions. (A previous version of these guidelines can be found [here](#). See also the summary of issues addressed in this document, [below](#).) There are two notable changes. First, we have added [recommendations about the dispensation \(or commutation\) of the obligation to attend Sunday Mass](#). Second, we have consolidated the differing guidance for the various phases of re-opening because we anticipate that, for the foreseeable future, health authorities will continue to call for physical distancing and the use of masks, even in jurisdictions where larger gatherings and more public and commercial activities are permitted. (In general, we presume adherence to federal, state, and local health regulations.) With respect to gatherings in church, the main difference between jurisdictions in more restrictive phases and those jurisdictions with a lower burden of infection and fewer restrictions is typically the size of gatherings permitted. Aside from these two changes, most of our other recommended practices will remain the same across the varied phases of reopening in different jurisdictions.*

General Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic presents a serious threat to physical health. In response, public authorities are right to place limits on gatherings, to discourage unnecessary activities, and to call for physical distancing. At the same time, access to divine worship and to sacraments is of high importance for the spiritual good and the overall well-being of the faithful. As Catholics, we maintain that Christian worship and sacraments are just as necessary for the human person --

¹Dr. Timothy P. Flanigan, M.D. (Prof. of Medicine (infectious diseases), Alpert Medical School of Brown University); Dr. Thomas W. McGovern, M.D. (Catholic Medical Association National Board Member, Former Clinical Research Physician, U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases); Dr. Paul Cieslak, M.D. (*Infectious Diseases & Public Health, Catholic Medical Association member*); Fr. Dominic Legge, O.P. (Assist. Prof. of Theology, Director of the Thomistic Institute, Dominican House of Studies); Fr. Nicanor Austriaco, O.P. (Prof. of Biology, Providence College); Fr. Dominic Langevin, O.P. (Assistant Professor, Editor of *The Thomist*, Dominican House of Studies); Fr. Paul Scalia (Vicar for Clergy, Diocese of Arlington); Fr. Gregory Pine, O.P. (Thomistic Institute). We are grateful for the comments and review of Dr. Thomas Cesario, M.D. (*Prof. of Medicine (infectious diseases), Univ. of Calif. Irvine School of Medicine*); Dr. Suzanne Strom, M.D. (*Associate Clinical Professor, University of California, Irvine*); Dr. Daniel Sulmasy, M.D., Ph.D. (*Prof. of Medicine, Georgetown University*); Fr. Christopher Pollard (*Diocese of Arlington*); Rev. Msgr. Robert J. Vitillo (*Attaché, Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the UN in Geneva and Secretary General, International Catholic Migration Commission*); and Fr. John Baptist Ku, O.P. (*Assoc. Prof., Dominican House of Studies*).

indeed, far more necessary -- than many commercial activities now permitted. This is particularly true in a time of widespread anxiety and potentially grave sickness.

The guidance provided here aims to clarify how such spiritual care, including public Masses, can be responsibly offered. In fact, in this time, we recommend that the faithful attend Mass insofar as possible. Of course, each person must make a prudent decision about whether he or she should come to church, in view of the particular circumstances of each, but with appropriate precautions in place (as detailed below), we encourage the faithful to return to Mass at this time.

Livestreamed Masses are worth continuing for those unable to attend Mass in person, but watching such Masses by definition is a “virtual” activity that falls short of a true personal presence and participation in the Mass and in the sacraments. Of their very essence, the Mass and the sacraments are concrete, real, personal and even physical encounters that communicate grace to those who participate in them. The activity of someone watching a livestreamed Mass is qualitatively different from someone participating in-person: a livestream viewer is not “present” to the sacred action in the same way, nor is the real sacramental presence of Christ in the Eucharist “present” to a remote viewer in the same way. Indeed, Catholic worship, and above all the divine worship of a Sunday Mass on the Lord’s Day, paradigmatically calls the faithful to a true, active, live, and in-person participation.

We affirm that Mass can be held safely with measures in place to decrease the risk of viral transmission, that the faithful can safely attend Mass in person, and can even receive the Holy Eucharist at Mass. Recognizing this is of critical importance so that the Eucharist -- the source and summit of the Christian life -- can continue to be celebrated across various jurisdictions with varying public health restrictions.

This document was prepared at the request of bishops and is offered to them in service to their ministry. It is based on current guidance issued by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), and other public health authorities. It also integrate the requirements of the Catholic Church for the valid and licit celebration of the Mass, in accord with Catholic teaching, liturgical law, and canon law. We have endeavored to formulate these recommendations with great care to preserve and respect the reverence due to the Holy Eucharist and the powerful liturgical and sacramental symbolism of the rites of the Mass.

Latest information on how COVID-19 spreads:

According to [the latest information from the CDC](#) (updated July 3, 2020), “The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person to person, mainly through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled

into the lungs. Spread is more likely when people are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).” [The CDC adds](#): “Currently, there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food.”

The CDC went into more detail on this topic via its [“Food and Coronavirus 2019 \(COVID 19\)”](#) webpage: “It is possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object, including food or food packaging, that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. However, this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.” (updated June 25, 2020)

The CDC does not recommend that food take-out services be stopped, although it does counsel maintaining physical distancing measures (6 foot distance) where possible.

Part I: Summary of Issues and Concerns Addressed in This Version

1. Physical distancing

Physical distancing and the avoidance of “close contact” is recommended as the primary way of reducing risk of transmission of the Covid-19 virus. [“Close contact” is defined by the CDC](#) as being within 6 feet of a person for at least 15 minutes. As such, we recommend that a minimum distance of six feet be maintained amongst members of the congregation. (Members of a single household do not need to practice physical distancing with each other and so may sit together.) We further recommend that a six-foot distance be maintained between the priest, assisting ministers, and altar servers insofar as is practicable. We recognize that some parts of the liturgy (such as at the reception of Holy Communion) require brief moments when persons are in close proximity, but brief encounters do not present the same degree of risk as longer encounters.

2. Masks and cloth face coverings

We recommend that members of the congregation wear masks or cloth face coverings during indoor Masses (except for when receiving Holy Communion) to decrease the spread of airborne droplets and the subsequent risk of transmission. Wearing face coverings is a risk-reduction measure that permits as many people as possible to attend Mass in person. In particular, this helps guard against transmitting the virus to the elderly and immunocompromised members of the congregation and to those who assist in their care. As explained below, the priest and other ministers do not need to wear masks during the liturgy (except for during the distribution of Holy Communion), given their sacred

roles and given that they will be a sufficient distance from the congregation for most of the Mass.

3. Dispensation/Commutation of the Obligation to Attend Sunday Mass

The sudden onset and spread of Covid-19 initially resulted in the closure of most churches and the widespread granting of a dispensation to the faithful from the obligation of attending Mass on Sundays. Much has changed since then. It now seems likely that at least some Covid-related restrictions will remain in place until a vaccine is found. Some bishops are now rightfully concerned that the Church be permitted to resume Sunday worship, that the faithful not fall out of the practice of keeping holy the Lord's Day, and that no one would be given the impression that prayer and the worship of God are unnecessary, optional, or private activities.

Given our current circumstances, we do not recommend that dioceses rescind in wholesale fashion the dispensation from the Sunday Mass obligation. Some persons remain at higher risk of serious illness from the virus, and likewise some are extremely nervous about participating in gatherings in churches and other public places.

Nonetheless, it may be opportune for dioceses to consider modifying the current general dispensation from Sunday Mass attendance. For example, in order to underline the importance of prayer and worship on Sunday, a diocese could issue a **commutation of the Sunday Mass obligation for reasons of health**, rather than a dispensation (cf. canon 1245). In this case, the diocese might state that every Christian is obliged to keep holy the Lord's Day, but that, given the current pandemic, all those who do not attend Sunday Mass in person for reasons of health or due to other restrictions on Mass attendance (for example, limited availability due to restrictions on the size of gatherings), may fulfill their Sunday obligation by performing another designated pious exercise (for example, the diocese might designate praying the rosary, or reading the scriptures for 30 minutes, or spending 30 minutes in adoration or in private prayer in a Church at another time of day). In this way, it would be clear that keeping holy the Lord's Day is of fundamental importance for every Christian -- indeed, that it is constitutive of what it means to be a disciple of the Lord. It would encourage each of the faithful to make a judgment about whether it is prudent to return to Mass. It would also make clear that one should not stay away from Mass for other reasons (for example, in order to engage in recreation).

4. Singing

We recommend that the faithful refrain from singing during the celebration of Mass and that choirs should not be used per [CDC guidelines](#). If music is used at Mass, we suggest using an individual cantor who remains as far from the congregation as possible (for

example, in the choir loft). At a minimum, a cantor should be more than six feet away from the congregation.

5. Reception of Holy Communion

Receiving the Body of Christ in Holy Communion is central to the Christian life.² [Part II](#) of this document outlines specific guidelines for distribution of Holy Communion during Mass, in accord with the most typical public health restrictions. For guidelines for distributing Holy Communion outside of Mass, which could be done even under the most restrictive limits on the size of public gatherings, see [the appendix at the end of this document](#).

Part II: Detailed Guidelines for the Celebration of Holy Mass

In most jurisdictions, there are limits on the number of persons permitted in public gatherings or worship service, along with strong recommendations of frequent hand hygiene, vigilance in maintaining physical distancing, and the use of face coverings in public.

Anyone feeling sick should stay home, and anyone who has been in close contact with a Covid+ individual should self-quarantine for 14 days.³ According to the CDC, anyone who has tested positive for Covid should self-isolate for ten days after the onset of symptoms (or, if asymptomatic, for ten days from the date of the test).⁴

Current public health guidelines recognize that some necessary tasks (e.g., receiving medical care, purchasing food, visiting a pharmacy, working in an essential business) may require that one come closer than 6 feet to others for brief periods. Reception of the sacraments is important for the faithful in the midst of this pandemic, and so the same rationale applies: one should generally try to avoid being within 6 feet of others, but where necessary, a momentary interaction presents an acceptable risk, especially if other precautions are taken. Given how the virus is thought to spread, this risk is lower for brief encounters than in cases of prolonged contact.

² Catechism of the Catholic Church [1416](#), [1417](#)

³ “Close contact” with a COVID-19 case is defined by the CDC as contact with a person who is COVID+ for a prolonged period of time (typically 15 minutes or more) or direct infectious exposure (via respiratory droplets, like being sneezed on) to someone who is COVID+. ([CDC on "close contact"](#))

⁴ [According to the latest guidance from the CDC](#), a person who has tested positive for Covid may end self-isolation when at least 10 days have passed since symptom onset, and at least 24 hours have passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications, and if other symptoms have improved.

1. General Provisions

- **Commute the Sunday Mass obligation for those who do not attend Mass for reasons of health or due to restrictions on Mass attendance.** A diocese might state that every Christian is obliged to keep holy the Lord's Day, but that, given the current pandemic, all those who do not attend Sunday Mass in person for reasons of health or due to other restrictions on Mass attendance (for example, limited availability due to restrictions on the size of gatherings), may fulfill their Sunday obligation by performing another designated pious exercise (e.g., the diocese might designate praying the rosary, reading the scriptures for 30 minutes, or spending 30 minutes in adoration or in private prayer in a Church at another time of day).
- Tell the faithful that anyone with a cough of any sort, and anyone feeling sick, should not come to the church for a visit or for any ceremonies.
- Place hand sanitizer near the entrances to a church. Encourage those entering and exiting to perform hand hygiene.
- Regularly clean and disinfect commonly-touched surfaces in the church. (See [CDC recommendations on cleaning your facility](#).)
- If recommended by the relevant health authorities, the faithful should wear cloth face coverings when in public, including when they come to church. Surgical masks or N-95 respirators are not recommended. (See [CDC recommendations on face coverings](#).)
 - Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. (See [CDC recommendations on face coverings](#).)
 - See below for special instructions concerning the reception of Holy Communion.

2. Limiting the Size of the Congregation & Physical Distancing

- Masses will generally be limited in attendance, depending on the guidance of public health authorities. Federal, state or local health authorities may modify guidelines to be more or less restrictive for a given jurisdiction. For example, some jurisdictions may allow more people to be present depending on the capacity of the church building (e.g., the fire code capacity).

- **Recommendation:** Masses could be scheduled with greater frequency. In some dioceses, attendance is allocated by asking the faithful to register by phone or online in order to reserve a space.
- **Alternative:** “Drive-in” or outdoor Masses are possible (the celebration of Mass in a location visible to the faithful who remain in their cars). For example, a Mass could be celebrated on the front steps of a church, or in a church parking lot (perhaps on a platform erected for this purpose). Such events generally are not subject to the same restrictions on the size of gatherings.
- **Strict Distancing During Mass:**
 - The faithful should maintain a 6-foot distance from each other at all times.
 - **Recommendation:** Use tape to close off rows of seating in the church, in order to guide the faithful to sit at least 6 feet from each other (for example, allow seating every third row).
 - Members of a single household do not need to practice physical distancing with each other and so may sit together in the same row. (For example, if a group arrived in a single private vehicle, they could sit together.)
 - In areas where the faithful might stand in line (for example, waiting to go to confession or to receive Holy Communion), place tape on the floor to indicate proper spacing between persons.
 - Station ushers at the entrances of the church to help “direct traffic,” to encourage the faithful to keep 6 feet from each other while entering and exiting the building. (Members of a single household may enter and exit together, since they do not need to practice physical distancing with each other.)
 - Suggestion: ask the congregation to depart by rows at the end of Mass to avoid crowding at the exits.
 - If all the available spaces are filled, do not admit additional people to the church building.
 - Encourage the faithful to maintain physical distancing everywhere on the church property (on the church steps, in the parking lot, etc.).
 - Develop a plan for restroom use: limit the number of people who enter a restroom at the same time, and place tape on the floor outside of the restroom to indicate where people should stand in line to wait for the restroom, while maintaining a 6-foot distance from each other.
 - Singing should be discouraged in general. (Singing, especially in close proximity to others, may increase the risk of viral spread.)

3. Specific Provisions for the Parts of the Mass

- A priest with a respiratory infection of any kind should avoid celebrating public masses or administering sacraments. The same holds for other ministers who might serve at a Mass (deacon, servers, lectors) as well as for sacristans, ushers, etc.
- The priest celebrant and other ministers (deacons, servers, lectors) should **not** wear masks or gloves during the celebration of Mass. Instead, they should remain more than 6 feet from the congregation during the entirety of the Mass. In such circumstances, there is no substantial risk of infection.
 - A further consideration: the Mass is imbued with powerful sacramental and liturgical symbolism. Wearing a mask and gloves would be a detrimental counter-sign in this context, and it is not warranted by considerations of hygiene if the priest remains a proper distance from the congregation. (An analogy: public health officials often do not wear masks during press conferences, given the nature of those public appearances and the distance between the officials and the audience/press, although they do wear them in private meetings.)
- To the extent possible, the other ministers (deacon, servers, lectors) should maintain a 6-foot distance from the priest and from each other, except as provided below.
 - *Suggestion:* The priest could place the missal on a stand at the chair or even on the altar when he recites the presidential prayers, rather than having a server hold the book.
 - Maintain a proper distance in the sacristy and during the entrance and recessional processions.
 - If necessary given the configuration of the church, consider modifying the procession's route in order to maintain a 6-foot distance from members of the congregation.
 - The offertory procession (bringing up the gifts) should be omitted.
 - A deacon (if present) or a server may bring the missal, chalice, paten/ciborium, and cruets of wine and water to the altar, while the priest remains at the chair. (Alternatively, the priest could do this himself.) After the deacon or server moves away, the priest could come to the altar and arrange the items on the altar.
 - The lavabo should be done by the priest alone, without assistance, either at a credence table near the altar or at the side of the altar itself. After the priest returns to the center of the altar, a server could then remove the lavabo items.

- Special provision should be made for the collection -- baskets should not be passed from person to person. Long-handled baskets could be acceptable if the ushers can remain a suitable distance from others.
 - Alternative: set up central boxes or collection points where the faithful can place their contributions.
- If hosts for the communion of the faithful are to be consecrated, they could be placed on a second corporal towards the side of the altar. This allows the priest to proffer the words of consecration directly over the host he will consume, with the other hosts on the altar but not directly in front of the priest as he speaks the Eucharistic prayer.
- For the elevation of the sacred species at “*Through him, and with him, and in him,*” if a deacon is present, he may stand alongside the priest and elevate the chalice. Since this action is brief, he need not remain 6 feet from the priest while doing so.
- The invitation to the faithful to exchange a sign of peace should be omitted.

4. The Distribution of Holy Communion

We recommend two possible ways for handling the issue of Holy Communion, in order to reflect both the Church’s great reverence for the Eucharist and the powerful sacramental and liturgical symbolism of Holy Communion, while also providing appropriate precautions against infection. “Option A” provides for Holy Communion immediately at the end of Mass, with additional precautions (our recommended option). “Option B” provides for Holy Communion during Mass, with more modest precautions.

Option A has several advantages (explained in more detail below): it more clearly communicates that the faithful need not receive Holy Communion if they have reservations; allows for the priest to wear a mask for Holy Communion while preserving the principle that the priest would never be masked during Mass (in Option B, the priest does not wear a mask for Communion because it is during Mass); and provides for hand sanitizer at the communion stations.

A note on the use of gloves: We do not recommend the use of gloves for the distribution of Holy Communion. Hand sanitizer is effective against the virus, and it is better to sanitize the hands between encounters than to wear a single pair of gloves for multiple encounters. (Thus, in Option A, we recommend that the minister distributing Holy Communion use hand sanitizer immediately if he senses that he has touched the communicant. If the priest is wearing gloves, it is more likely that he will inadvertently touch the communicant and may not realize he has done so. It is also less likely that the

priest will use hand sanitizer if he is already wearing gloves.) In view of this, there is no need to introduce medical gloves into the rite of Communion. This recommendation is strengthened in view of the sacredness of the Eucharist and the interpersonal symbolism of the liturgical encounter.

NB: As noted above, as of July 3, [the CDC's most recent guidance](#) states: "Currently, there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food." The CDC does not recommend that food take-out services be stopped, although it does counsel maintaining physical distancing measures (6 foot distance) where possible.

Option A: Mass followed by the distribution of Holy Communion, with special precautions

The strengths of this option are: it respects the symbolic and liturgical integrity of the Mass (which should be celebrated without mask or gloves), avoids any practices in the Mass that could become sources of future liturgical abuse, gives a greater freedom to the faithful to determine whether or not they will come forward for Holy Communion (some may be nervous about doing so), and also provides for additional precautions to reduce risk. It also will permit the priest to remove his chasuble for the distribution of Holy Communion, given that it is difficult to launder if anyone should sneeze or cough on him.

- At the start of Mass, or at a suitable point during Mass, an announcement should be made to explain that those who desire to receive Holy Communion may do so at the conclusion of the Mass. It may add that the faithful should maintain a 6-foot distance from each other as they come forward for Holy Communion.
- The Precious Blood should not be distributed to the faithful, nor should the faithful receive the Eucharist by intinction. (A deacon or a concelebrating priest, if present, may receive by intinction.)
- A sufficient quantity of hosts for distribution to the faithful should be consecrated at the Mass.
- The priest (and, if present, the deacon) would consume the Eucharist in the normal way, but would not immediately proceed to distribute Communion to the servers or the faithful. Rather, the newly-consecrated hosts would be briefly placed in the tabernacle awaiting the conclusion of the Mass.
- After the concluding blessing and the dismissal, the priest (and deacon, if present) remain in the sanctuary. At the chair, the priest removes his chasuble and the deacon removes his dalmatic.
- A small table should be placed at each communion station, with an unfolded corporal and a bottle of hand sanitizer.

- The priest (and any other ministers distributing Holy Communion) should use hand sanitizer immediately before approaching the tabernacle. He may also don a surgical mask or cloth face covering.
 - NB: If the priest who has celebrated the Mass is in a higher-risk group, a different priest, arriving at the conclusion of Mass, might distribute Holy Communion in his place.
- Now vested in alb and stole, the priest retrieves the newly-consecrated hosts from the tabernacle and returns to the altar.
- Holding up a single host, he says: “*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.*” He then leads the people in saying: “*Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed.*”
- The priest (and other ministers if present) proceeds to the place prepared for distribution of Communion. Each stands next to a table with corporal and hand sanitizer in order to distribute Communion.
- The faithful should remove or lower any face coverings just before presenting themselves before the minister to receive Holy Communion.
- Holy Communion may not be distributed with gloves, nor may it be received in the hand if a member of the faithful is wearing gloves.
 - Hand hygiene is effective against the virus. In these circumstances, gloves are not needed.
- The faithful receive Holy Communion in the normal way. If the priest senses that his fingers have touched the communicant, he should pause, place the ciborium on the corporal, and use hand sanitizer. (He may also arrange for an ablution cup to be on the table, and may purify his fingers in the ablution cup before using hand sanitizer.) He may repeat this process as often as he judges necessary during the distribution of Holy Communion. It is not necessary, however, for him to use hand sanitizer between each communicant, unless he makes actual contact. (For communion on the tongue, see below.)
- **Communion on the tongue vs. in the hand:** We have carefully considered the question of Communion on the tongue vs. Communion in the hand. Given the Church’s existing guidance on this point (see [*Redemptionis Sacramentum*](#), no. 92), and recognizing the differing judgments and sensibilities that are involved, we believe that, with the additional precautions listed here, it is possible to distribute on the tongue without unreasonable risk.
 - Opinions on this point are varied within the medical and scientific community. Some believe Communion on the tongue involves an elevated and, in the light of all the circumstances, an unreasonable risk; others disagree. If Communion on the tongue is provided, we recommend at this

time either a separate communion station for those receiving Communion on the tongue or that they receive at the end of the distribution of Holy Communion, and we suggest that the minister use hand sanitizer after each communicant who receives on the tongue.

- At the conclusion of the distribution of Holy Communion, the priest (and any other ministers) return the remaining hosts to the tabernacle.
- The faithful may return to their places to make a brief prayer of thanksgiving, after which they may depart at their discretion. The priest also has the option of furnishing a more formal conclusion to the ceremony by using the concluding prayer, blessing, and dismissal from the *Rite for Holy Communion Outside of Mass*, as follows:

“Let us pray. O God, who in this wonderful Sacrament have left us a memorial of your Passion, grant us, we pray, so to revere the sacred mysteries of your Body and Blood that we may always experience in ourselves the fruits of your redemption. Who live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.”

He then gives a blessing in the normal way and dismisses the people with: *“Go in the peace of Christ.”*

Option B: Mass with the distribution of Holy Communion during Mass

This is also a reasonable option, especially in circumstances where mitigated precautions are appropriate. Given that Holy Communion is distributed during the Mass, more care should be taken to avoid adopting hygiene measures that could become a counter-sign to the liturgical and sacramental signification of the priest’s actions at Mass. This option therefore does not recommend the same level of precautions as Option A: we do not recommend that a priest wear a mask for the distribution of Holy Communion during Mass, and we caution that the frequent and obvious use of hand sanitizer during Mass is to be discouraged.

- At the start of Mass, or at a suitable point during Mass, the priest should explain that, for those who desire to receive Holy Communion, they may do so at the appropriate moment, but that those who wish to remain in their places may do so. He may add that the faithful should maintain a 6-foot distance from each other as they come forward for Holy Communion.
- The Precious Blood will not be distributed to the faithful, nor should the faithful receive the Eucharist by intinction. (A deacon or a concelebrating priest, if present, may receive by intinction.)

- The faithful should remove or lower any face coverings just before presenting themselves before the minister to receive Holy Communion.
- Holy Communion may not be distributed with gloves, nor may it be received in the hand if a member of the faithful is wearing gloves.
 - The priest should perform hand hygiene (e.g., with hand sanitizer) immediately before distributing Holy Communion.
 - Hand hygiene is effective against the virus. In these circumstances, gloves are not needed.
- **Communion on the tongue vs. in the hand:** We have carefully considered the question of Communion on the tongue vs. Communion in the hand. Given the Church's existing guidance on this point (see [Redemptionis Sacramentum](#), no. 92), and recognizing the differing judgments and sensibilities that are involved, we believe that, with the additional precautions listed here, it is possible to distribute on the tongue without unreasonable risk.
 - Opinions on this point are varied within the medical and scientific community. Some believe Communion on the tongue involves an elevated and, in the light of all the circumstances, an unreasonable risk; others disagree. If Communion on the tongue is provided, we recommend at this time either a separate communion station for those receiving Communion on the tongue or that they receive at the end of the distribution of Holy Communion, and we suggest that the minister use hand sanitizer after each communicant who receives on the tongue.
- The faithful receive Holy Communion in the normal way.
- At the conclusion of the distribution of Holy Communion, the priest (and any other ministers) return the remaining hosts to the tabernacle, and then perform hand hygiene (e.g., with hand sanitizer).
- The Mass concludes as normal.

A Note about Drive-in Masses or Drive-up Holy Communion:

In cases where the faithful are in their cars (either for a drive-in Mass or drive-up distribution of Holy Communion), the communicants should get out of their cars to receive, one car at a time. This could be done akin to what is [recommended above for Holy Communion after Mass](#).

This is preferable from a public health perspective, because it permits the priest (wearing a mask but not gloves) to stand next to a hand sanitizing station (a table with corporal and hand sanitizer, as described above) and thus gives him the ability to sanitize his hands

after each Holy Communion, if necessary. If the priest walks from car to car or from window to window, this hand hygiene would be difficult.

It is also preferable from a sacramental perspective, because it removes the temptation to pass the Eucharist from person to person in the car, if a passenger is not near an open window, and eliminates the problem of self-communication.

In addition, distribution of the Eucharist in another vessel or container (a plastic bag, paper cup, or a metal pyx) is not warranted from a public health perspective and may even increase risk: CDC guidance suggests that the virus is not easily transmitted by food, whereas passing other containers from person to person involves more contact with surfaces. From a sacramental perspective, there are additional reasons to discourage this practice, dealing with reverence for the sacrament, the problem of self-communication, the danger of profanation, and the problem of purifying or disposing of containers.

In principle, there should be no public health objection to having people exit their cars, one car at a time (perhaps guided by an usher to direct traffic). This would not constitute a large gathering.

Appendix: Distribution of Holy Communion to Individuals outside of Mass (may be done while observing strict limits to the size of public gatherings)

Even where there are very strict limits on public gatherings, it is possible to distribute Holy Communion to individuals outside of Mass, as described below. Attending Mass in person is obviously far preferable and is to be encouraged whenever and wherever public health restrictions allow. This is not meant to be a substitute for attending Mass, but a stop-gap measure in a time of serious disruption.

- Only a small number of the faithful are admitted to the church at any one time (under current restrictions, this might be less than 8 or less than 10 persons).
- Station ushers outside of the church to control the flow of traffic. Ask the faithful to remain in their cars until it is their turn to stand in line.
- Designate a waiting area outside of the church where the faithful can line up, maintaining a 6-foot distance from each other at all time.
- A small table should be placed at each communion station, with an unfolded corporal and a bottle of hand sanitizer.

- The priest (and any other ministers) use hand sanitizer immediately before beginning to distribute Holy Communion. They may also don a surgical mask or cloth face covering.
- Allow into the church at any time only the number permitted by local health authorities (e.g., no more than 10 persons at a time).
- Place tape on the floor of the aisle of the church to indicate where the faithful should stand before receiving Holy Communion. This will help ensure proper physical distancing.
- After a cohort of the faithful enter and take their places in line, the priest conducts the *Rite for Holy Communion Outside of Mass*, choosing the option for the short form of the readings (e.g., Jn 6:54-55, Jn 14:6, Jn 14:23, or the other options set forth in that Rite).
- As provided in that Rite, he holds up a single host and says: “*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.*” He then leads the people in saying: “*Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed.*”
 - The faithful should lower any face coverings before coming forward for Holy Communion.
 - Holy Communion may not be distributed with gloves, nor may it be received in the hand if a member of the faithful is wearing gloves.
 - Hand hygiene is effective against the virus. In these circumstances, gloves are not needed if the priest performs hand hygiene.
- The faithful receive Holy Communion in the normal way. If the priest senses that his fingers have touched the communicant, he should pause, place the ciborium on the corporal, and use hand sanitizer. (He may also arrange for an ablution cup to be on the table, and may purify his fingers in the ablution cup before using hand sanitizer.) He may repeat this process as often as he judges necessary during the distribution of Holy Communion. It is not necessary, however, for him to use hand sanitizer between each communicant, unless he makes actual contact. (For communion on the tongue, see below.)
- **Communion on the tongue vs. in the hand:** We have carefully considered the question of Communion on the tongue vs. Communion in the hand. Given the Church’s existing guidance on this point (see [*Redemptionis Sacramentum*](#), no. 92), and recognizing the differing judgments and sensibilities that are involved, we believe that, with the additional precautions listed here, it is possible to distribute on the tongue without unreasonable risk.
 - Opinions on this point are varied within the medical and scientific community. Some believe Communion on the tongue involves an elevated

and, in the light of all the circumstances, an unreasonable risk; others disagree. If Communion on the tongue is provided, we recommend at this time either a separate communion station for those receiving Communion on the tongue or that they receive at the end of the distribution of Holy Communion, and we suggest that the minister use hand sanitizer after each communicant who receives on the tongue.

- After receiving Holy Communion, the faithful move towards the exit, to another area marked with tape on the floor to indicate proper spacing. A brief period of silence should ensue to permit each person to say a prayer of thanksgiving.
- The priest then offers a concluding prayer as provided in the Rite. For example:
“Let us pray. O God, who in this wonderful Sacrament have left us a memorial of your Passion, grant us, we pray, so to revere the sacred mysteries of your Body and Blood that we may always experience in ourselves the fruits of your redemption. Who live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.”
- He then gives a blessing in the normal way and dismisses the people with: *“Go in the peace of Christ.”*
- The group exits the church by a separate door, and the usher lets in the next group of the faithful.