



MEMORANDUM

To: Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Leaders, Parishes, and Religious Houses

From: Most Reverend Daniel E. Thomas

Re: Update on Sunday Obligation Dispensation and Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound

Date: 13 August 2020

Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer.
-Romans 12: 12

As we progress forward during the current COVID-19 pandemic, it is prudent to provide another update on the current guidelines already in effect and to provide further clarification on some issues. I continue to be encouraged and grateful for the many ways in which our Catholic faithful are ministered to and for the various means parishes have employed to keep their parishioners connected to their parish. Throughout these months we have made every effort to provide pastoral guidance, keeping in mind the guidance issued by state, county, and local public health officials and to implement them to the best of our practical ability using prudence and pastoral sensitivity. I thank all who have taken, and continue to take, those steps necessary to safeguard the faithful, as best as humanly possible, when attending Mass and other liturgies. Apart from the following updates, the liturgical guidelines remain in effect until further notice.

SUNDAY OBLIGATION DISPENSATION

Kindly inform the faithful that they continue to be dispensed from their obligation to attend Sunday Mass until further notice. Together with the Bishops of Ohio and our priests, I will continue to reassess the continuance of the dispensation. Those who are elderly, sick, or in a high risk category should be reminded and strongly encouraged to refrain from attending Mass out of concern for their own well-being and out of Christian charity for others.

HOLY COMMUNION TO THE SICK AND HOMEBOUND

An area for particular concern is the pastoral care of the sick and homebound. Priests, of course, are encouraged to continue their pastoral care of the sick offering the Sacraments of Anointing, Reconciliation, and Holy Communion as appropriate.

Since the onset of the pandemic there have been various restrictions enacted in hospitals, nursing homes, and care facilities that have prevented ministry to the sick. Concern for the homebound who are at high risk, especially the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions, necessitated the cessation of home visits for the distribution of Holy Communion. Currently, only priests are permitted to bring Holy Communion to the sick and I am grateful for their generous ministry in this area. As we continue to see the easing of restrictions at hospitals and nursing homes, Holy Communion may be brought by a Priest, Deacon or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to those in health care facilities according to their present policies.

A Priest, Deacon, or commissioned Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion may distribute Holy Communion to the homebound according to the following guidelines:

- Visits to the homebound should be made on an individual basis. A minister should not make visits to multiple homes, one after another.
- An Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion should arrange with the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader for access to the Blessed Sacrament and the procurement of a pyx and burse for the visit.
- All ministers should practice the best prudent practical pastoral judgement concerning social distancing and face coverings/masks during the visit.
- All ministers should wash/sanitize their hands before and after a home visit.
- Pyxes should be properly purified and washed after each visit, preferably with hot soapy water.

The best prudent practical pastoral judgement should be used in arranging these visits. Many of the homebound or their families may not be comfortable with a home visit at this time. Their concerns should be respected. Also, out of concern for the well-being of the homebound, we should take all the necessary care and precautions to ensure that visits are carried out as safely as possible. Although this will mean extra vigilance, our homebound brothers and sisters deserve this concern for their health and well-being.

Once we have moved past this pandemic, the Office for Divine Worship will work on providing updated resources and guidance to help with the worthy and respectful distribution of Holy Communion to hospitals, nursing homes, care facilities, and the homebound.

Know that I continue to keep you and your intentions in prayer. May our Blessed Mother, assumed into heaven, intercede for us to almighty God that this pandemic may quickly cease and that those who suffer its effects be restored to health.

Our Lady, Queen of Heaven, pray for us.