

June 1, 2018

Dear Parishioners of St. Mary,

Recently our Archbishop, Alexander Sample, sent out a letter to the clergy regarding 'Communion Services.' So I wanted to make you aware of the change that will be happening after June 3rd. He said that in the absence of a priest to offer Mass, the distribution of Holy Communion on weekdays in the parish church during a "Communion service" will no longer be permitted. This does not affect such Communion services in nursing homes, prisons, etc., where the people do not have the opportunity to attend Mass on Sunday in the parish. The following is the rationale for that change that the Archbishop laid out in *The Catholic Sentinel*:

There is an intimate and intrinsic link between three realities that is essential in this context. They are the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the priest who ministers in the person of Christ, and the distribution of Holy Communion. These are not to be separated except for serious reasons and pastoral need. As long as the faithful have the opportunity to participate in Mass and receive Holy Communion on Sunday, there is no such pastoral need to receive Holy Communion outside of Mass.

When we go to Mass, we are there to do much more than just receive Holy Communion. We participate actively and consciously in the offering of Christ, the Paschal Victim, through the hands of the priest, who ministers in the very person of Christ at the altar. From this sacramental offering, we receive the Body and Blood of the Lord, thus culminating our participation in the paschal mystery being celebrated. This is the way the Church has always viewed this. The Church never envisioned breaking them apart by distributing Communion outside of Mass. This is only done for the sick and those otherwise unable to participate in the Sunday Eucharist. To do otherwise is very poor sacramental and Eucharistic theology.

When Mass cannot be offered on a weekday in a particular church, parishioners are invited to experience the wider Church by attending daily Mass in a neighboring parish. The faithful can also gather for other forms of prayer, and our Office of Divine Worship has prepared a prayer service for such occasions that include parts of the Liturgy of the Hours with readings from the Mass of the day. This is a way to experience another form of the Church's liturgical prayer.

These changes may take some time for adjustment, but I am confident that they will lead us to a more profound reverence for the most precious gift of the Holy Eucharist, and a more informed, conscious and active participation in the Holy Mass. And a greater love for our Lord in the Mass and in the Blessed Sacrament will lead to a greater love of neighbor and service to the poor.

As your pastor, I will do my best to make sure that you have access to the Masses each day of the week at the usual times, unless it is unavoidable, like for instance for the upcoming priest retreat, June 4th – 8th. So during those days there will be an adapted Liturgy of the Hours that will be prayed in place of Mass, and there will no longer be communion service provided.

In Christ,

Fr. Ron Nelson