

Feb. 13, 2020

Dear Parishioners of St. Mary,

For quite some time now, every week or every couple of weeks, we have been finding Consecrated Hosts on the floor in the Church. We have reviewed our security of footage but have been unable to determine who is responsible. This is a very serious issue, because, as Catholics, we recognize that a Consecrated Host is truly Our Lord Jesus Christ, and that Sacred Host must be treated with the utmost reverence. A consecrated host is truly our Lord substantially present, body, blood, soul, and divinity. According to canon law (the law of the Church) mistreatment of the Sacred Host is a very serious offence:

*Can. 1367 - A person who throws away the consecrated species or takes or retains them for a sacrilegious purpose incurs a **latae sententiae** excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See; moreover, a cleric can be punished with another penalty, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state.*

The phrase, *latae sententiae*, is Latin which means “sentence (already) passed.” This means, then, that a person is automatically excommunicated when they desecrate the Eucharist, and removal of that excommunication is reserved to Holy See in Rome. Note: Ignorance does excuse the censure.

So, what does this mean for someone who has done this with knowledge? It means that even if that person goes to Confession, the priest does not have the authority to remove that excommunication. The priest would need to tell that penitent to come back at a later date (in about a month) while the priest had the opportunity to contact the Apostolic Penitentiary of the Holy See, without using the person’s name, and let him know that a person has come to the priest confessing desecration of the Eucharist. Then the person would return to the priest, and the priest would inform the penitent of what is necessary; usually the priest is given the authority from the Holy See to remove that particular censure in that circumstance.

There is another option. We are blessed to have in our own vicariate a designated missionary of mercy, Fr. Theodore Lange, the Pastor at St. Catherine of Siena parish. He was made a Missionary of Mercy through the Holy See after Pope Francis declared an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. His status as a Missionary of Mercy was extended beyond that Jubilee year of mercy. He, as a Missionary of Mercy, has the authority to remove those excommunications reserved to the Holy See and forgive the sin.

As you can see this is a very serious thing. Therefore, I want to make a few requests:

- 1) If you mistakenly receive the Eucharist and do not know what to do with the Sacred Host, please bring it to one of the people who distribute the Eucharist (the priest, or one of the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion). Do not intentionally drop the host on the floor.
- 2) Parents, make sure that your children are only receiving communion if they have received their First Holy Communion; and, if they have, insure that they are showing the proper reverence and consuming the Sacred Host.
- 3) Parishioners, if you see someone who has not consumed the Sacred Host, ask them to consume it, or to give it to you. Then you can bring the Sacred Host to the priest or one of the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.
- 4) If you have accidentally or intentionally desecrated the Eucharist, come talk to your priest, or talk to Fr. Theodore Lange, to have any censure of excommunication removed (if necessary).

Thank you for helping to ensure that our Eucharistic Lord is treated with the utmost reverence!

In Christ,

Rev. Ronald Nelson, Pastor