



Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn

Archdiocesan Protocols for Coronavirus (COVID-19) *Reception of Holy Communion in the Hand*

The protocols for reception of Holy Communion that the Archdiocese has adopted are informed by the best medical expertise. In issuing these protocols, the Archbishop has acted according to *Canon 837* of the *Code of Canon Law* which recognises that liturgical actions are “celebrations of the Church itself as the ‘sacrament of unity,’ that is, the holy people united and ordered under the bishops.”

The sensitive issue of asking all members of the faithful to receive Holy Communion in the hand – and not on the tongue – is in accord with sound reason, unity in our communities and the good of the faithful – in this case their physical health.

Given the living tradition of the Church, which highlights the most ancient practice of receiving Holy Communion in the hand, the Archbishop has the authority to instruct the faithful to receive Holy Communion in the hand during this time of Pandemic, with no exceptions.

From the earliest of times, the Church has always honoured our Eucharistic Lord with deep, and somewhat graphic faith, combined with practical piety. For instance, St. Cyril (313-386), in commenting on a 1st Century church document, teaches:

In approaching Holy Communion, come not with your wrists extended, or your fingers spread, but make your left hand a throne for the right, as for that which is to receive a King. Receive the Body of Christ, saying over it, Amen. So then after having carefully hallowed your eyes by the touch of the Holy Body, partake of it. Be careful lest you lose any portion of it, for whatever you lose, is evidently a loss to you as it were from one of your own members.

Then after you have partaken of the Body of Christ, draw near also to the Cup of His Blood, not stretching forth your hands, but bending and saying with an air of worship and reverence, Amen. And while the moisture is still upon your lips, touch it with your hands, and hallow your eyes and brow and the other organs of sense. Then wait for the prayer, and give thanks unto God, who has accounted you worthy of so great mysteries (*Catechetical Lecture 23*).

The faithful should be assured that in receiving Communion in the hand they are acting in accord with past generations of believers.

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