

Introduction

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

During times of epidemic or disease, the Church has been faced with decisions regarding distribution of the Sacred Gifts. The Body and Blood of Christ are the Most precious elements in creation. They are both spiritual and material food. As such, what is spiritual can never be tainted or contaminated. God is God and only one is holy. However, the elements of bread and wine which make up the precious gifts and the vessels that contain them, and utensils that distribute them, must be treated with meticulous handling, not only in times of disease, but every and in all times. The following guidelines maintain that the Body and Blood of Our Savior can never be infected, but the hands that prepare it and mouths that receive it, may contain pathogens. It is with the utmost caution and care that we as priests, prepare and distribute Our Lord to the faithful. Considering, Coronavirus and other virulent communicable microorganisms, we present the following pastoral recommendations and guidelines.

Ad Hoc Committee

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CORNAVIRUS PREVENTION/MITIGATION/BEST PRACTICES (Final Draft)

I. CDC Guidelines and General Hygiene Practices (Basic Practices)

1. Good oral hygiene; brushing, flossing, and not eating prior to receiving Holy Communion

Rationale: Chalice and its contents can become contaminated and infect others

2. When having any cold/flu symptoms, self-quarantine. Stay at home until symptoms are gone

Rationale: Self-quarantine can prevent the spread of infection

3. Refrain from receiving Holy Communion when having a cold or anytime there are mouth issues. i.e. cold sores, mouth sores, thrush, fungal infection, etc.

Rationale: Chalice and its contents can become contaminated and infect others

4. Wash Hands with soap and water or use commercial hand sanitizer

Rationale: Helps prevent the spread of illness and disease

5. Get an annual flu vaccine or the higher dosage flu vaccine for Seniors, as should be done every year

Rationale: Helps prevent contracting flu virus and mortality

6. Contact your health provider for specific guidance on your symptoms and your health conditions

Rationale: Do not delay care

NB: There is no recognized treatment for the coronavirus

7. Use of CDC Posters in public areas

Rationale – Public Health Awareness

II. Immediate Recommendations (Pre-Outbreak)

1. Before entering church disinfect hands with a disinfectant at the entrance of the Temple

Rationale: Helps prevent the spread of illness and disease

2. Do not shake hands

Rationale: Helps prevent the spread of illness and disease

3. Do not kiss other parishioners or the hands of Clergy

Rationale: Helps prevent the spread of illness and disease

4. Do not kiss Holy Images, instead venerate by bowing. Do not kiss hand cross

Rationale: Helps prevent the spread of illness and disease

5. Do not use worship books

Rationale: Helps prevent the spread of illness and disease

6. Suspend non liturgical meetings of the faithful and catechists

Rationale: Helps prevent the spread of illness and disease

III. Alternate Distribution/Reception of Holy Communion and other Practices (Pre-Outbreak/Outbreak)

1. Refrain from Holy Communion completely. Bless each parishioner individually with the Chalice, in lieu of reception of Holy Communionⁱ

Rationale – It has been done in the past, in place of reception of Holy Communion and there is no risk of transmission of flu (and anyone else that has a medical condition who is unable to receive).

2. Intinction in the same manner as the Melkite Church – larger pieces of the Sacred Body are cut. The priest alone dips the piece into the Precious Blood and places the particle into the mouth of the communicant. No spoon is used. Priest should wash hands immediately prior to distributing communion.

Rationale – less chance for cross contamination

3. Permit the Body of Christ to be distributed alone without comingling with the Precious Blood in the hand or by celebrant placing it into the mouth of the communicant

Rationale – repeated use of spoon in the Communion Cup can spread germs. As in Latin Rite, the Precious Blood is contained in the Bread (Sacred Body) alone. Less chance for spread of disease/infection

4. Special preparation of Pre-Sanctified Holy Communion - use an additional Chalice for the Precious Blood to be used specifically for Pre-sanctified liturgy or intinct the Sacred Body prior to drinking the Precious Blood

Rationale – the celebrant can pass on germs to the Body of Christ (Bread) via the communion cup if he drinks prior to intinction

5. Instruct parishioners in the proper reception of Holy Communion; with mouth opened widely, not touching the spoon with tongue or lips. Alternately, disposable spoons can be used for each parishioner, set aside, cleaned and disposed of properly.

Rationale: Chalice and its contents can become contaminated and infect others

6. Mirovanije/antidoron should either be discontinued or placed in the hands of the recipient by the priest/deacon after washing hands

Rationale – less chance for cross contamination

7. The use of Holy Water fonts should be discontinued

Rationale – less chance for cross contamination

IV. Clergy and Church Staff (Best Practices)

1. After purifying the Chalice, clean and sanitize Chalice, Spoon, and Spear with hot soapy water or dishwasher liquid after each service

Rationale: Accepted sanitary practices

2. Use a fresh napkin at each service

Rationale: Prevents infection

3. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

Rationale: Prevents infection

4. Wash Hands Frequently

Rationale: Prevents infection of self and others

5. Practice proper hygiene. Do not drink from the Chalice first, if you have flu symptoms or mouth infection

Rationale: Prevents infection of others

6. Educate and encourage staff to cover their mouths and noses with a tissue when they cough or sneeze, and to throw the tissue away after use

Rationale: Prevents infection of others

7. Remind staff to stay home when they have flu-like symptoms

Rationale: Prevents infection of others

8. Consider temporarily closing children's programs if flu is widespread in the community

Rationale: Prevents infection of vulnerable population

REFERENCES AND LINKS

Community Mitigation Guidance for COVID-19 Response in the United States. (2020, February 27). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/preparing-individuals-communities.html>

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Prevention, Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). (2020, February 15). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html>

¹ Father Barasab noted when he was a boy people fasted from midnight. If someone did not feel well, they might have to break the fast and as a result does not receive Holy Communion. They also refrained from receiving Holy Communion unless they received the Sacrament of Penance that month. At any given Divine Liturgy there were, therefore, some people who were not communicating. The understanding among Christ's Faithful was that if they did not receive Holy Communion, they still received the benediction with the Lord's Body and Blood at "Save Your people, O Lord, and bless Your inheritance." [The Bishop] mentioned that we might have to make people aware of the meaning of this blessing. Also, in those parishes that distribute it, the antidoron should be used for those who do not feel well enough to receive Holy Communion but would like the strengthening of a sacramental. In this case the antidoron might be distributed as I witnessed once in Slovakia, with a large spoon of tablespoon size.