

Adsum

Adsum is published by the seminarians of **Mater Dei Seminary** for the enjoyment of our families, friends, and benefactors.

LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

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The month of April is dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament, and in this issue of the seminary newsletter, I would like to review some of the liturgical laws which pertain to the Holy Eucharist and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. For when we consider the great details legislated by the Catholic Church in the celebration of Holy Mass, the distribution of Holy Communion, and the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament on the altar, we will have a greater appreciation for the theological axiom, *lex orandi - lex credendi*, i.e. the law of praying is the law of believing. Indeed, the Catholic Church firmly believes the words of Christ—*This is My Body; this is the Chalice of My Blood*—and Her laws are a constant reminder of the Real Presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine.

First of all, the Catholic Church requires Her priests to genuflect immediately before and after they touch the Blessed Sacrament; furthermore, the very first thing they do whenever they open the tabernacle and the very last thing they do before they close it is to bend the knee in adoration. This is a constant reminder to stay focused on the Real Presence. Another rubric is that once the priest has consecrated the bread into the Body of Christ, he keeps the thumb and first finger of both hands together so as to protect any Sacred Particles on his fingers.

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With my prayers and blessing,
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Answer: On July 29, 1927, the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments, in reply to the question whether on the occasion of the administration of Holy Communion to a sick person those living in the house of the sick person may also receive the Blessed Sacrament, answered in the affirmative, “provided the Ordinary of the place grants the faculty according to the provision cited, namely for each case and by way of act.”

In an instruction of the Secretary of the Congregation annexed to this response it was stated that the Ordinary may delegate this faculty to others, though he should be very careful to concede it only to priests who are sufficiently prudent not to abuse this extraordinary privilege. For it must be remembered that it is a general law that, outside of the administration of Holy Communion to the sick, the Blessed Eucharist may be received only in places where Mass may be celebrated. Hence, even if a priest has received from his Ordinary the right to give Holy Communion to persons who are not ill on the occasion of Holy Communion to the sick, he should use it with great discretion. Certainly, if a priest is accustomed to bring Holy Communion to a sick woman two or three times a week, it would seem to be an abuse of the faculty in question to give Holy Communion on each occasion to her nurse or her daughter, just because this latter cannot get to church that day. But I believe the faculty could be used for such a person once a month—for example, on the First Friday. Furthermore, I believe that even a priest who has not received the required permission or delegation from the Ordinary might, by a reasonable use of *epikeia* (an interpretation of law in a particular case against the letter of the law, but in accordance with the spirit, as reasonable supposed to exist in the mind of the legislator), give Holy Communion in such circumstances to one who is not sick, when he finds out about a situation justifying the exception only on his arrival.

The following statement of Father Sheehan in his doctoral dissertation is pertinent to this case. It must be remembered that he is presuming that the permission of the local Ordinary or of his delegate has already been given for the administration of Holy Communion to one who is not ill, and he is concerned only with the place of administration. “Holy Communion should not be given in a bedroom, except to the sick. However, when in an exceptional case the one who cares for the sick person cannot leave him to go to an oratory or to some other becoming place, *epikeia* can warrant the distribution of Communion to the attendant in the bedroom of the sick person.”

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