**A Communion Update:**

As you know, we have continued to offer communion on the tongue at St. Robert and Good Shepherd. As I have communicated in the past, a priest does not have the authority on his own to refuse communion on the tongue. This is the normal way of receiving communion and every Catholic has the right to receive communion this way. This is the first reason we have continued this practice, though I know some priests have refused to give communion on the tongue.

There is, however, a second reason that we have kept with this practice: science. From the beginning some experts in the medical field (who are also Catholic and therefore interested in the Mass), stated that they did not think communion on the tongue when kneeling was more risky than communion in the hand. See for example: https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/21-doctors-tell-bishops-communion-on-tongue-safer-than-in-hand

After seven months of public Masses the evidence bears this out. Masses have not become super spreader events. In fact, back in the summer, a study showed that the only known cases of Masses where even one person probably became infected with covid *because* *of* being at Mass were where physical distancing and the wearing of masks didn’t happen. It had nothing to do with communion on the tongue.

More recently, there have been studies that indicate more strongly that infection through surfaces is not likely. This for example: https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(20)30561-2/fulltext. Or this: https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/12/28/948936133/still-disinfecting-surfaces-it-might-not-be-worth-it

This is a change from the professional speculation at the beginning of 2020. And this comes from those who continue to push the seriousness of the virus.

It is certainly the case that there are no studies that show there is any connection between receiving on the tongue, specifically when there is no physical contact between priest and communicant, and transmission of the virus. There are also no studies that show this risk is any higher than the risk of receiving in the hand.

All this is to say that our offering of communion on the tongue is not some religious practice that flies in the face of physical safety, reason and what we know through science. We look to faith and reason to help us identify and overcome groundless fear.

Asking that those who wish to receive on the tongue kneel, if physically possible, is to help make it easier to give communion without making physical contact. If this happens (physical contact), which is very rare, us ministers continue to pause and sanitize our hands before moving on to the next communicant. There is no evidence as of now that communion on the hand or on the tongue is a serious risk, and there is growing evidence that however one receives communion, this act on its own is not a serious risk for transmitting the coronavirus.

This being said, some ask that we offer a way for those who want to receive in the hand to receive from a minister who hasn’t been giving out communion on the tongue. In my desire to find the right balance, going forward, Fr. Anthony and I will make ourselves available immediately after Mass for those who have been at Mass and would wish to receive in this way. This will allow us to wash our hands thoroughly after Mass and then distribute communion. I would ask that if you are concerned with contracting covid from us because we are giving out communion on the tongue, please come up front to the foot of the sanctuary after Mass and we will bring you communion.

My dear brothers and sisters, God is with us. More than anything, be on guard against fear, judgement, anger, bitterness, self-pity, discouragement, and our self-sufficient pride. Place all your trust in Jesus, present above all in His Church and the Eucharist. Place the needs of others before your own. Love by following God’s commands. He will lead us through this, as He does all the crosses in this life. Do not be afraid.